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Official Records

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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Emomali Rahmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

Mr. Emomali Rahmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rahmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rahmonov (*interpretation from Russian*): I wish at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. Udovenko, on your election to the important post of President of the General Assembly, and to wish you success in guiding the work of a forum that is so important for the entire international community.

Speaking from this rostrum three years ago, I stressed that, in spite of the armed confrontation that was then on the increase in my country, the leadership of Tajikistan had opted for a consistent policy of political dialogue as the only means of achieving peace and national reconciliation.

Today the results of that policy can be seen. With active international support, the negotiation process led to historic decisions being taken by the Tajik people, laying the groundwork for successful progress towards peace and national reconciliation.

I should like to take this opportunity to express sincere gratitude to the members of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his Special Representative in Tajikistan, Mr. Gerd Merrem, for the constant and close attention that they have paid to achieving a settlement in Tajikistan, and, indeed, to the problems of Tajikistan in general. We greatly appreciate the efforts of the Russian Federation, the Islamic Republic of Iran and other States, as well as international and regional organizations, that acted as observers at the inter-Tajik talks and made a significant contribution to the very difficult negotiation process. We are deeply grateful to all friendly countries, to international organizations and primarily to members of the United Nations system that have assisted and continue to provide assistance in the establishment of a lasting peace and accord in Tajikistan.

We are fully determined to strive consistently and unwaveringly for the full implementation of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan and for the achievement of national accord. Here we count on growing support from the United Nations and its observer missions, acting in close cooperation with the Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Without

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such cooperation, it would be extremely difficult to implement the military component of the inter-Tajik agreements or to achieve a final solution to the problem of refugees.

Another important aspect of United Nations assistance to the peace process in Tajikistan is the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy on humanitarian aid and post-conflict reconstruction of our economy. An excellent framework for this effort is provided by General Assembly resolution 51/30 J adopted on 25 April 1997 on emergency international humanitarian assistance for lasting peace and reconciliation in Tajikistan. We hope that in the course of this session this useful initiative will be continued and that an updated resolution will be adopted taking fully into account the specifics of the transition period and the humanitarian needs of the people of Tajikistan.

Among the multitude of conflicts and crisis situations which unfortunately entered a new phase during the period following the cold war, we are particularly concerned about the situation in the neighbouring Islamic State of Afghanistan. Together with our Central Asian partners in the CIS and with Russia, we have repeatedly expressed our profound concern over the destabilizing impact of the situation in Afghanistan on the entire region, as well as on the situation beyond the region.

On the initiative of the Almaty Five, about a year ago the Security Council became more actively involved in Afghan problems. Along with resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, Security Council decisions are the best foundation for ending the fratricidal war that has been going on for so many years there.

I have to say frankly that the fact that the Afghan problem remains unsettled may undermine the fragile peace in Tajikistan. We hope that, taking into account the agreed position of the "Big Eight" Summit participants in Denver, and using their experience of cooperation to solve conflicts in the Balkans and other hot spots in the world, Russia and the United States, cooperating with other States concerned and supporting United Nations involvement, will play a decisive part in an Afghan settlement in the nearest possible future.

I will be honest with the Assembly: it is in Tajikistan's vital interests that peace be established in Afghanistan for another reason — it would help to reduce substantially the flow of arms and drugs across the Tajik-Afghan border, and it would reduce the proliferation of terrorism and waves of extremism which are destabilizing the entire region.

I would like to comment now on the issue of reform of our Organization. We attribute great importance to the United Nations as a key instrument for maintaining international peace and security. The idea of adjusting the United Nations to today's realities is certainly important and necessary. In today's transitional conditions, the stabilizing role of the United Nations must grow steadily.

We believe it is important to approach United Nations reform in a pragmatic way, concentrating on the most pressing issues, and maintaining a reasonable balance between innovation and strengthening mechanisms that have proved their effectiveness.

As a State that has experienced first-hand all the hardships of civil war and has travelled the difficult road towards national reconciliation with active support and assistance from the United Nations, Tajikistan is convinced of the need to preserve strong and efficient peacemaking mechanisms. First and foremost, this relates to the work of the Security Council, which has to maintain timeliness and effectiveness. We believe that Security Council representation would be enhanced if its membership were expanded not only to candidates from industrialized States, such as Germany and Japan, but also to representatives from developing countries on a rotational basis.

On administrative and budget issues, we consider it important to ensure zero actual and, if possible, zero nominal growth of the United Nations budget. We must utilize material and human resources more efficiently, and we must strengthen mechanisms monitoring the work of the United Nations apparatus. We must also count on the understanding of the international community in respect of temporary financial difficulties facing some developing States and countries emerging from conflicts.

We consider it right that the strategy for the twenty-first century should be sustainable development, ensuring conservation of the environment and natural resources. Although we were not entirely satisfied with the results of the recent nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, held last summer, it is important that that session outlined ways of expediting progress in key areas of sustainable development, as defined in Agenda 21.

As a country that has suffered from civil war and is in transition to market relationships, Tajikistan expects

the United Nations to pay closer attention and participate more efficiently in ensuring sustainable development in countries with transitional economies, including introducing measures to neutralize the negative social consequences of such transitions. We believe that the United Nations can and must maintain its unique role in providing international support for the integration of States in transition into global economic and trade systems and for their involvement in the existing and emerging regulatory institutions and mechanisms. These demands were reflected in the Agenda for Development, which was adopted by the General Assembly in June this year.

The absence of peaceful conditions in Tajikistan has prevented it from moving towards sustainable development in any significant way, and consequently it has not been able fully to implement the recommendations of Agenda 21.

Due to the civil confrontations that have swept the country, the main efforts of the Government of Tajikistan in recent years have been aimed at eradicating conflict, establishing peace and tranquillity, and creating conditions to integrate the population into active economic and creative work.

The new prospects for peace provide us with an opportunity to redouble our efforts and concentrate on unsolved problems. The most important of these include the rapid reconstruction of the social and economic infrastructure that had been destroyed; the return of refugees to their homes, together with their social and psychological adjustment and reintegration into the new conditions of life; the active involvement of citizens in economic activity through the creation of jobs, which are crucial; and, above all, the creation of conditions conducive to the democratic development of Tajik society.

Today, an intensive transition to a socially oriented market economy is under way in Tajikistan. Against the background of an increasingly far-reaching peace process, the Government of Tajikistan is carrying out economic reforms that promise positive results in the foreseeable future. The country's natural wealth, water supply, energy and intellectual resources are favourable to such a development.

However, reality demands that we confront the situation with honesty. We must admit that without international support it would be extremely difficult for us to carry out the reconstruction and creative tasks quickly. In the first place, it is a question of donors continuing their commendable efforts to extend humanitarian assistance to our most vulnerable population groups, which have suffered from the civil war. Economic reforms under way in the country also need efficient and targeted support. This would involve an additional flow of investment into Tajikistan, the more active involvement of the country's export potential in international trade transactions, and our gradual integration into international financial and trade institutions. I should like to express my conviction that, at this stage of its development, Tajikistan will not be left alone to deal with its problems.

The goal set out in the Charter of the United Nations,

> "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war",

has very special meaning for the people of Tajikistan, who have experienced the bitter taste of fratricidal war. Our experience has shown that the work of the United Nations, based on the coordinated efforts of its Member States, can achieve tangible results and resolve seemingly irreconcilable differences, thereby enabling us to move onto a peaceful, non-violent track.

We note the tireless efforts of the United Nations in maintaining and strengthening international peace and security on a practical level under new and constantly changing conditions. We believe that useful momentum for this work could be provided by convening, in 1999, a third international peace conference, an initiative that is enjoying growing support among members of the international community. Greater in-depth discussion of this issue on the threshold of the twenty-first century would further promote mutual understanding and cooperation in the world, taking account of the interests of all on the basis of the equality of all nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Tajikistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Emomali Rahmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah.

Prince Mohamed Bolkiah (Brunei Darussalam): I extend my warmest congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election. I am sure you will guide us well, and we look forward to working with you.

I would also like to congratulate our Secretary-General on the excellent start he has made in answer to the Members' call for reform. At the same time, I would like to thank the outgoing President for his support in this most important work.

You take office at a critical time, Mr President. There are obviously no easy solutions to the many challenges faced by our Organization. But there is one thing I hope we can all do: be positive and constructive in our approach. With this in mind, I would like to comment briefly on two aspects of current United Nations work that particularly concern us in Brunei Darussalam. The first is peace and security and the second is the Secretary-General's reform package.

On peace and security, we were pleased to have had the chance to do something to help in the Middle East and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. But we have been dismayed by what has taken place this year, particularly in the Middle East. The current situation is not what we expected. The disruption of the peace process clearly started when Israel decided to build settlements in East Jerusalem. This was bad policy. It was obviously not aimed at helping the peace process. Thus, we would like to see the Israelis do something positive to repair the damage done.

We have made our position clear for many years. We do not wish to return to the past. It is time for more than words, arguments and resolutions. What we want to see is a peace process that actually proceeds. Somehow, the impasse must be broken, and we greatly appreciate the efforts being made by Jordan, Egypt and the United States to do that. We encourage them and all countries that can help to continue their efforts, despite the many difficulties.

Concerning the situation in Bosnia, we have also been disappointed by the way certain elements continue to undermine the cause of peace. There are overwhelming signs from the peoples of Bosnia that they welcome the new opportunities they have for a normal life. We are therefore pleased to see the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations taking strong action to enforce the Dayton Agreement. In our view, such action is definitely being taken on behalf of the Bosnian people. We offer them our full support.

These are just two of the areas where we have seen setbacks to United Nations efforts. We can add many others in Europe, Asia and Africa. What is required everywhere is a determination to resolve all problems peacefully by means of dialogue and negotiation.

Given that spirit, progress is possible. We have seen evidence of it in the great efforts being made in northeast Asia to try to find a solution to the problems on the Korean Peninsula. The difficult situation in Korea could affect all of us in the Asia-Pacific region, so we very much welcome the four-party talks as a way of reducing tension and building confidence. For the same reason, we are happy to support the initiative of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), since it will help remove one serious threat to peace.

On the question of lasting peace, however, we have learned to take nothing for granted.

Some causes of instability have been dramatically highlighted in our own region this year. The recent attacks on our currencies and our financial institutions have shocked us all. They cannot be dismissed as mere ups and downs in the market. It is all very well for commentators to say so, but this is not good enough; it is too simplistic. The effect is like a disease, and it goes for the heart of our economic systems. It seeks out weak points, and developing countries have limited built-in resistance.

Yes, we will survive. Our foundations are sound. But the experience has taught us a lesson. We are realizing how deeply we are all affected by globalization, market forces and interdependence. The playing field is anything but level, and this means that the world organizations to which we belong must be highly effective.

The most important of these is the United Nations, and this brings me to the questions I know the Secretary-General is keen to hear all of us answer at this session: What do we think of his package of proposed reforms? Are they going to help developing nations?

My broad reply would be to say that we think the package is better than the previous attempts to achieve reform. Overall, it firmly addresses the right questions,

and, having long supported the idea of United Nations reform, we welcome the proposals.

However, we do have a few comments to offer. We believe they are constructive and hope they will be taken into account by the Secretary-General. As many others have remarked, the proposal seems, basically, to be a management package. It reflects the Secretary-General's long experience in the Organization. But good management principles represent only one aspect of the reforms we need. We hope that an acceptable consensus will be reached on matters which especially concern developing nations.

We would like the Secretary-General to make absolutely sure that nothing is going to weaken the things the United Nations does so well for ordinary people. The United Nations work in the field gives the Organization meaning for millions. We must not let our agencies down.

With regard to the proposals concerning peace and security, we hope that the Working Group will soon complete its work on the Security Council. This aspect of reform will certainly strengthen the Organization as a whole.

With regard to development cooperation, we welcome efforts to enhance it. It represents all that is best in international cooperation. It is also directly linked to the important Chapter IX of our Charter, which calls for higher standards of living, full employment and economic and social progress. Without these, there can be no lasting peace and security in the developing world.

Lastly, there is the question of financial viability, perhaps the most important of all if reforms are to be effective. We find the various proposals interesting, but what we are concerned about is whether they provide a long-term solution. We therefore want to give these matters more thought. Naturally, we rely on the Committee to look very carefully indeed into the details of any such scheme.

Having made these points, I should like to conclude by once again offering my congratulations to the Secretary-General on his work. As I said, it is a good start. When the work is finished, we hope that the result will be not only administrative reform but a strong renewal of the deepest principles of our Charter.

We wish the Secretary-General, and you yourself, Mr. President, much success in the year ahead. We assure you that we will do all we can to assist fellow Members in responding well to what the Secretary-General has rightly described as unprecedented demands and opportunities.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, His Excellency The Honourable Ralph Maraj.

Mr. Maraj (Trinidad and Tobago): On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I have the distinct pleasure and honour to extend sincere congratulations to you, Sir, and to the Government of Ukraine on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this fifty-second session. I am confident that, under your able leadership, the urgent and important issues which face the General Assembly at this critical time in the history of the United Nations will be advanced.

I would also like to express my profound appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for his excellent stewardship over the last session. His inimitable and dynamic style has left a distinctive mark on the *modus operandi* of the General Assembly. Ambassador Ismail deserves our commendation for his efforts to advance the work of the General Assembly on issues such as the reform of the Security Council, the Agenda for Development and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of Agenda 21.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Today, as we approach the twenty-first century and a new range of issues demands our attention as nation States, our commitment to the United Nations is no less focused, no less poignant. Trinidad and Tobago continues to believe in the efficacy of the United Nations, a body now at a critical point in its evolution. We applaud Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has presented perhaps the most extensive reform proposals in the history of the Organization. A restructured Organization will be better poised to respond more readily to the challenges of the next century. There is no doubt about the need of the international community for the United Nations. No other body remotely approximates its universality of membership and it remains the most appropriate forum for addressing the interrelated issues of peace, security and sustainable development.

While the international community must address these perennial issues, we need at the same time to confront the daunting tasks of providing humanitarian

assistance and reconstructive aid and ensuring the promotion of good governance, democracy and human rights. In this post-cold-war period, the United Nations must strive to build an international community based on peace, justice, equity, democracy and the rule of international law.

Trinidad and Tobago is concerned about the rise in political conflicts and tensions and the unresolved long-standing disputes which continue to threaten international peace and security. Increased efforts must be made by the international community to address these conflicts through peaceful means. Trinidad and Tobago wishes to restate its commitment to the non-use of force in the conduct of international relations and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We will continue to support United Nations-led peacekeeping missions and do our part to further democracy, as exemplified by our participation in the election processes in such countries as Haiti, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Namibia and South Africa.

This General Assembly will address yet again the continuing quest for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. At this delicate period in the peace process, Trinidad and Tobago believes that durable peace will be achieved only if all parties to the dispute adhere to the relevant United Nations resolutions and implement the agreements and guarantees to which they have committed themselves in bilateral and multilateral negotiations.

We in the Caribbean region appreciate the support given by the international community to the Government and people of Haiti. This support has contributed to the progress made so far in the building of democracy and the strengthening of its institutions. We are convinced that the recent decision to extend the mandate of the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti was necessary to consolidate gains already made. We must continue to provide material and other support to strengthen Haiti's democracy and its economic development. These are necessary pillars for the establishment of durable peace and stability in that country.

Trinidad and Tobago, as a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), pledges to continue to do its part in consolidating this process. It is in this context that we welcomed Haiti as the fifteenth member State of CARICOM at the meeting last July of the Heads of Government of CARICOM, which was held in Montego Bay in Jamaica. Trinidad and Tobago continues to participate in the efforts of the international community in this transition period, as evidenced by the fact that a Trinidad and Tobago national, Ambassador Colin Granderson, is the Executive Director of the Organization of American States/United Nations International Civilian Mission in Haiti. It will also be recalled that Trinidad and Tobago, as part of a hemispheric effort, participated in the military mission that restored the democratically elected President to Haiti and our efforts have continued at both the civilian and military levels after that objective was achieved.

In the post-cold-war era, the world has witnessed an escalation in the abuse of human rights, including some cases of genocide and other heinous crimes against humanity. Trinidad and Tobago has always been concerned about such atrocities. Trinidad and Tobago is proud of the role it played in reintroducing on the international political and legal agenda the question of the establishment of a permanent international criminal court.

The Government of my country is heartened by the increasing support for the establishment of the international criminal court and we welcome the substantial progress made thus far by the Preparatory Committee for its establishment. Trinidad and Tobago urges Member States to continue their constructive and active participation during the forthcoming sessions of the Preparatory Committee. We further urge wider involvement in the process so as to ensure the successful negotiation of a widely acceptable statute, which will be finalized at a conference of plenipotentiaries to be held in Rome in the summer of 1998.

It is because of this concern for the promotion and protection of human rights and our absolute condemnation of acts of genocide and crimes against humanity that Trinidad and Tobago participated at the highest level through our President, Mr. Arthur N. R. Robinson, at a conference in Italy on reining in impunity for international crimes and serious violations of fundamental human rights. That conference addressed issues pertaining to the ongoing work of the Preparatory Committee and unanimous support was expressed for a permanent international criminal court to ensure that perpetrators of such crimes are brought to justice.

Linked to the considerations of peace and security are the myriad socio-economic problems which continue to undermine the stability of our nations. In this regard, the international community has sought to respond by convening a series of world conferences to analyse the global situation and provide blueprints for action at the national, regional and international levels.

A continuing concern for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains the failure on the part of the international community to provide adequate resources for the accelerated implementation of the commitments made at these conferences. Any reform of the United Nations system aimed at delivering mandated programmes in a more efficient manner must therefore take this factor into account.

The World Summit for Social Development, which was held in Copenhagen in 1995, highlighted the urgent need to eradicate poverty and to develop policies to promote social and economic equity. In October 1996, as a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, a Caribbean Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Eradication was held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The assembled Ministers developed a Plan of Action on poverty eradication, which is guiding Governments of the region in the elaboration of their own national plans. In this regard, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has adopted and is vigilantly pursuing as one of its primary objectives a policy of sustained economic growth with equity, with special emphasis on poverty eradication.

My Government recognizes the central role of education and its impact on the eradication of poverty and we have begun to reform the curriculum to give all children equal access to quality education as we strive continuously in Trinidad and Tobago towards achieving a "total quality nation". Education, in itself, is central to the Government's objective of producing a total quality nation, in which all our citizenry strives for excellence, is committed to the highest standards, is technologically equipped to deal with the realities of a knowledge-based work environment and is afforded opportunities for life-long learning.

In addition, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has established mechanisms for addressing the scourge of poverty and societal inequities through the following initiatives.

First, we established a change-management unit for poverty eradication and equity-building, which reports to a Ministerial Council on Social Development. This Council was launched in October 1996, with the assistance of the Poverty Strategies Initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Government applauds UNDP's support.

Secondly, we set up a Committee on Social Displacement. The Committee's terms of reference include the development of holistic plans to provide relief to all homeless and destitute persons.

Thirdly, expenditure on several other social safety-net schemes has been significantly increased in order to deal with problems and issues affecting women, the elderly, children, adolescents, the disabled and the dispossessed.

These measures have been recognized and indeed reflected by UNDP in its 1997 *Human Development Report*, which lists Trinidad and Tobago at the top of the human poverty index rankings. According to the Report, Trinidad and Tobago is among those countries which have reduced human poverty to a human poverty index value of less than 10 per cent.

We must all continue to support efforts for the eradication of poverty in accordance with agreed programmes and plans of action. The assault on poverty, especially rural poverty, must take into account the special needs of women and their full integration in the development process.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore welcomes the progress achieved by the United Nations in following up the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, which had as one of its primary objectives the need to accord high priority to gender issues. It welcomes as well the appointment of a high-level official as a special adviser to the Secretary-General on gender issues and the advancement of women.

Social and economic problems transcend national boundaries and therefore require international solutions based on strengthened global partnerships to support action. When the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, The Honourable Basdeo Panday, addressed the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly, he identified a number of social problems which pose a particular threat to the stability and integrity of small States. Among the problems he mentioned were drug abuse and drug trafficking and the associated problems of money laundering and trafficking in small arms, as well as terrorism and social disintegration.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore welcomes the convening of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on illicit drugs, to be held in New York in June 1998. This session should provide an appropriate opportunity for Governments to review progress made in implementing the Global Programme of

Action on drugs adopted in February 1990 and serve to intensify drug-control strategies and cooperation worldwide.

The drug scourge and its attendant consequences require action at different levels. To that end, Caribbean Governments have decided to establish a criminal justice protection programme that would facilitate cooperation in the confidential protection of witnesses, jurors, judicial and law enforcement personnel and their families. If this programme is to be successfully implemented, additional training and technical assistance from the international community and agencies such as the United Nations International Drug Control Programme will be required.

The United Nations has a critical role to play, but it is the responsibility — indeed, the duty — of every State to act aggressively in this regard. Conscious of its responsibility, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has embarked upon initiatives to curb the illicit drug trade and eradicate the associated downstream activity of money laundering.

These initiatives are in keeping with international conventions and declarations, such as the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the Commonwealth Scheme relating to Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and the Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters. Trinidad and Tobago has also entered into bilateral agreements with other countries to foster cooperation with regard to arresting the growth of transnational crimes associated with trafficking.

Our Government has declared its commitment to eliminating the threats to the stability, security and safety of our society that emanate from the scourge of the illicit drug trade. Some of the measures taken include the following.

The first measure is the signing of an agreement on maritime counter-drug operations with the United States of America. This bilateral mechanism has already proved to be very effective in dealing with the pernicious drug trade.

The second measure is the extension of the Government's powers of extradition and the negotiation of agreements with countries with which it does not now have extradition agreements. We are renegotiating existing agreements to make extradition procedures more effective. Trinidad and Tobago is also fulfilling its obligations under existing extradition treaties.

The third measure is the serious implementation of money- laundering drug laws. The illicit gains of the drug trade and the resource base of drug criminals are being attacked. The property and profits of drug lords are being confiscated as a result of measures which have been introduced in my country.

Also, a task force to counter narcotics and money laundering has been established and the Government is pursuing law reform in the area of bank secrecy.

Another measure is that Trinidad and Tobago — with the cooperation of other CARICOM Governments, Canada, Britain and the United States of America — has created a witness protection programme. In addition, we are establishing the criminal justice protection programme to which I alluded earlier.

Finally, we continue to seek bilateral and multilateral assistance in various forms, such as equipment, personnel, aircraft and maritime support in our relentless fight against illicit drugs.

Earlier I referred to the efforts to reform this Organization. One of the key issues that will engage the attention of delegations at the fifty-second session is the question of the reform of the intergovernmental machinery. We are particularly interested in efforts at reform and reconstruction, especially as they relate to the development activities of the United Nations. We view with satisfaction the Secretary-General's proposal, introduced last March, that the new structure of the Secretariat should serve to bolster support for Africa's development, South-South cooperation and the sustainable development of small island States.

Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the recent decision of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly to hold a comprehensive review of the United Nations Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. That Conference, which was held in Barbados in 1994, was of historic significance, marking as it did the recognition on the part of the international community of the special situation and needs of small islands.

The Barbados Declaration and Programme of Action have as their overall objective the management of environmental problems, the management of our vital natural resources and the improvement of human-resource capability and institutional requirements for sustainable development of small island States in the overall context

of Agenda 21. We look forward to the full support of the United Nations and the international community when the comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action takes place in 1999.

A new phase of international cooperation for the Caribbean region was heralded in May 1997 at the first meeting of the secretariats of CARICOM and the United Nations, from which emanated a work programme for the implementation of special projects. We commend this initiative and are confident that this new relationship will be of benefit to the people of the Caribbean region.

The volcanic eruptions in Montserrat bring to the fore the vulnerability of small islands to natural disasters. This phenomenon and other environmental problems have received increased recognition since the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development. Trinidad and Tobago shares the anguish felt by the citizens of the Caribbean island of Montserrat, which is fast becoming uninhabitable. CARICOM member States have responded within their limited capabilities to the disaster, and we will continue to provide logistic and other support.

To this end, Trinidad and Tobago, in response to the plight of the Government and people of Montserrat, has pledged financial and technical assistance, medical and other relief and engineering personnel, and has been involved in the establishment of a CARICOM village in the northern part of the island of Montserrat — a decision that was taken at the recent conference of CARICOM Heads of Government. Within our available resources, Trinidad and Tobago will continue to be of assistance.

The special concerns of small island developing States were also incorporated in the recently adopted Agenda for Development. The Agenda recognizes the fact that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, and are the basis for the achievement of a higher quality of life for all people. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago attaches great significance to this issue. We are therefore pursuing economic, social and infrastructural development in a sustainable way which avoids environmental degradation, conserves our natural resource endowment and helps to build and maintain a long-term national capacity to support rising standards of living for the population, as well as opportunities for self-actualization.

Recent steps to promote sustainable development in Trinidad and Tobago in the area of environmental management include: the establishment of an environmental management authority and drafting of a national environmental policy; the development of environmental standards; the preparation of a water resources management strategy; the development of a national parks and watershed management project; and the commissioning of a study to assist in establishing a policy framework and facilities for the management of oil and hazardous wastes.

Trinidad and Tobago has also ratified several international conventions relating to the environment: the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer; the 1994 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the 1994 Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal; and the 1996 Convention on Biological Diversity.

In the area of macroeconomic policy, we have proceeded to liberalize the trade and exchange regimes to foster enhanced competitiveness; streamline the incentive framework; privatize State-owned enterprises to promote increasing levels of private investment; promote entrepreneurial activity through, among other measures, a venture capital regime; and to modernize and strengthen intellectual property legislation to encourage investment and the transfer of technology.

In the social sector, the Government has focused on rationalization and restructuring of the social service delivery system; expanding access to education for the school-age population; rationalization and strengthening of the health services through the health sector reform programme; regularization of squatter communities; restructuring of the unemployment relief programme to allow for skill acquisition through on-the-job training; the establishment of a community development fund to provide financing for the delivery of basic social services and infrastructure to the poor and vulnerable population groups and communities; and the provision of institutional support for the strengthening of non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations to assist in this regard.

Trinidad and Tobago is a cosmopolitan society in which the human rights of each individual are constitutionally guaranteed. We endeavour to achieve the cherished ideal of a truly democratic nation, in which all persons live together in harmony, with equal opportunities for all, in order that each individual may contribute to the process of national development. In this

context, one of the primary goals of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has been to seek to wider participation in the decision-making process through a strengthened local government machinery in a manner that will promote the empowerment of local communities in the pursuit of development efforts and the promotion of good governance.

In a similar vein, the United Nations, with the diversity of its membership, must harness individual and collective strengths to advance the interests of all Members of the Organization as we move into a new millennium. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the ongoing discussions aimed at reforming the membership and working procedures of the Security Council. It is our hope that this process will result in a Council whose composition more accurately reflects the wider membership of the General Assembly and whose working procedures are more open and inclusive than has previously been the norm.

We all need to work steadfastly to improve the image of the United Nations from one of goal-setting to one which facilitates prompt action by Members in a manner that is consistent and wide-ranging and takes into account the special needs of the most vulnerable among us.

It is incumbent on all Member States to imbue our Organization with a renewed sense of self-confidence, faith and optimism and to work in a global partnership to achieve the goals and ideals of the United Nations. We owe this legacy to present and future generations.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Rajkeswur Purryag, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Mauritius.

Mr. Purryag (Mauritius): Mr. President, I have the distinct honour and privilege on behalf of my delegation to extend to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations upon your election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Your election to this office is a fitting tribute to your personal qualities and recognition of the important role of your great nation in world affairs. We are confident that your wide experience and wisdom will ensure the success of our deliberations. You may rest assured of the fullest support and cooperation of my delegation.

I would also like to thank Ambassador Razali Ismail for his remarkable contribution to the last session. We thank him for his strong leadership and his hands-on approach during the discussions of some of the most difficult and crucial issues concerning the future of our Organization.

The changes taking place throughout the world today present new challenges for the United Nations system and call for a new approach in finding appropriate solutions. It is my firm belief that the success of the United Nations cannot be contemplated without reform and renewal of the Organization. We agree that the United Nations stands at a crossroads today. Its continued role and relevance depend on its ability to adapt to the new world environment.

We now have before us a number of proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report designed to better equip the United Nations to address its tasks in the new era. I thank the Secretary-General for this in-depth and valuable exercise. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to a great son of Africa and to his sterling qualities of leadership. The report not only addresses the strengths and weaknesses of our Organization, but also contains specific proposals to enable it to face present and future challenges on a sound footing. We subscribe fully to his view that this reform exercise is a process which will have to be carried out over a continuous period of time, given all its complexity and scope. I wish to assure you, Mr. President, that my delegation will extend its fullest cooperation and will actively participate in the deliberations on the report.

We also endorse the Secretary-General's proposals for promoting greater synergy within the United Nations system. We agree that they will advance complementarity and coherence. The effectiveness of the Organization will certainly be enhanced if it operates as an orchestrated unit at Headquarters and at country level, rather than as a group of semi-autonomous players.

Likewise, we welcome the Secretary-General's idea of setting up a development account to be fed by savings from reductions in non-programme costs. We express the sincere hope that sufficient funds will be made available to produce a significant impact on development programme financing. We should ensure that this dividend for development does indeed benefit the developing world, unlike the much-trumpeted "peace dividend" of the post-cold-war era.

We uphold the proposals aimed at enhancing the strategic direction which the General Assembly should provide. However, such proposals should be subjected to

the most careful scrutiny, because of all their implications, particularly in respect to the smaller and more vulnerable Member States. The General Assembly, as the Secretary-General rightly points out, is the organ that

> "most fully embodies the universal and democratic character of the Organization." *(A/51/950, para. 40)*

While we support the long-standing need for focusing legislative debates and streamlining this Assembly's agenda, we must ensure that this body does not end up being dominated by the concerns of the strong and powerful members only. Countries — big or small, like mine — should have equal possibilities of articulating any issue they consider important. It is by the way in which this Organization addresses issues most relevant to its smallest members that the international community at large will judge its significance.

The debate on the reform of the Security Council seems to have registered some notable movement recently. However, the distance separating the main positions remains quite daunting. We hope that the wide spectrum of views expressed so far on this subject will eventually converge and that general agreement will be reached. Such agreement should ensure that the composition of the reformed Council is based on greater representation, transparency and equitable geographical distribution, with the inclusion of developing countries as permanent members. In this regard, we reaffirm our support for the position of the Non-Aligned Movement calling for the expansion of the Security Council on the basis of fair and adequate representation.

Africa has also stated its position on this matter at the recent Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit. The current representation of Africa in the Council does not reflect its status as the most sizeable group of the Organization's membership. Reform of this body must, therefore, restore Africa's position to the fullest extent possible.

In the same vein, my delegation would like to reiterate its support for India's claim to a permanent seat in the Security Council.

The globalization of the world economy is adding increasing pressures on the developing countries to embrace trade liberalization as a means to achieve economic growth. During the Uruguay Round negotiations developing countries made significant concessions in the hope of obtaining improved access to international markets. Many of them have still not seen the benefits of the new global trading system. Instead, they are haunted by the spectre of imminent erosion of preferences in their major export markets. Several African countries have made strenuous efforts to adhere faithfully to structural adjustment programmes and have adopted trade liberalization policies. Unfortunately, they have registered but an insignificant, if not declining, percentage of world trade. Africa's trade should become the top priority of the international community; otherwise, the multilateral trading system will run the risk of becoming fraught with tensions and discrimination.

It is unfortunate to note that foreign direct investment, which plays a central role in the ongoing integration of the world economy, is still highly concentrated in a few countries. The recent findings of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) indicate that Africa received merely $5 billion out of $349 billion of foreign direct investment last year. Excluding South Africa, the share of Africa in the total investment for the developing countries figured at only 4 per cent. This is the lowest share since the early 1980s, and is a further indication that the African region is not benefiting from the global foreign direct investment boom. The 33 sub-Saharan countries that are classified among the least developed countries are in fact receiving less that 1 per cent of the total foreign direct investment for Africa. It is vital that these countries be provided with greater assistance and investment and be given special attention by the international community. Otherwise, they will be further marginalized, with the risk of disappearing from the world economic map.

We therefore wish this Assembly to give more attention to the development needs of the African continent. In this context, we welcome the recent special ministerial meeting of the Security Council, which has helped focus the attention of the international community on Africa. After several years of complacency and stagnation, there is now cause for some optimism.

We agree that it is incumbent upon us Africans to put our house in order. But unless we are freed from our debt burden, future generations may never have the opportunity to have access to clean drinking water, health care or proper schooling while scarce resources have to be utilized for debt payments.

For some countries, like Mozambique, which are just emerging from years of civil conflict, the Bretton

Woods initiative may have to be implemented in order to reduce debt faster. Indeed, not only do these countries have to reduce their crushing debt load, they also have to free resources to rehabilitate their economic infrastructure and fund social expenditure.

Last week the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Robin Cook, referred to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting held in Mauritius earlier this month, at which the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, made specific proposals with respect to debt. These proposals, known as the Mauritius Mandate, are meant to set some of the poorest nations on a path towards sustainable development by the year 2000. We welcome this laudable initiative by the British Government to write off debts totalling 132 million pounds of heavily indebted poor countries of the Commonwealth. We hope that this important measure will encourage major financial institutions and creditor nations to come forward and participate fully in transforming the destiny of debt-ridden poor countries.

We also welcome the various initiatives recently taken by the United States to promote investment and to develop a new trade regime for sub-Saharan Africa.

We equally appreciate the partnership between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, which has, through the successive Lomé Conventions, contributed immensely to the socio-economic development of the ACP countries. We are confident that the successor arrangement to the Fourth Lomé Convention will further consolidate this long-standing economic and trade partnership, and in this context we look forward to the continued support of the international community.

We welcome the communiqué of the Denver Summit, which represents a significant advance over the New Global Partnership for Development adopted at the Lyon Summit. The Declaration "Africa: Partnership for development" focuses attention exclusively on the African continent, with particular emphasis on the least-developed and landlocked countries. However, in the pledge to integrate the poorest countries into this world economy through trade liberalization and investment policies, no specific targets were defined on trade expansion or tariff reduction. If these countries are to be completely weaned from official development assistance, not only should their capacity to produce be strengthened, but they must also be given full access to foreign markets for their products, especially those coming from their nascent and developing industries.

We are fully conscious of the fact that North-South cooperation needs to be complemented by effective South-South cooperation. In this regard, the countries in our region have intensified their efforts to accomplish that goal.

For the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a new promising chapter was opened with the recent admission of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Seychelles. With the inclusion of these two new members, the regional grouping has become an even more important economic area in the African continent. It has the potential of becoming the driving force in promoting growth and development. There is a strong determination among the SADC members to achieve regional integration through industrial transformation and trade growth. My Government is fully committed to this goal, and I am pleased to inform this Assembly that Mauritius will have the honour and privilege of hosting the SADC summit meeting next year.

My Government is equally committed to the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), which regroups several countries of the Indian Ocean Rim in a tripartite network of Government, private sector and academia. The IOR-ARC was formally launched at a ministerial meeting in Mauritius in March this year with 14 founding members. It has generated tremendous interest among the countries of the region and internationally.

We remain confident that the international community will lend its support to these regional associations. We welcome the timely initiative announced last week by the United States Secretary of State to enhance dialogue with SADC and encourage investments and trade exchanges.

It is a matter of regret that the special session of the General Assembly held last June to review the progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21 was unable to agree on a frank assessment of the commitments entered into at Rio. Unfortunately, very little has been done on the ground. In some areas, particularly with regard to the level of official development assistance, the overall situation has actually worsened. It is disappointing that the lack of new and additional resources has not allowed the special concerns of the small island developing countries, as expressed in the Barbados Programme of Action, to be adequately addressed.

We also regret that on the question of climatic change, no consensus on limits relating to the emission of greenhouse gases could be reached. We hope that the Kyoto Conference on Climate Change will seriously address this issue and adopt meaningful measures to cut down the production of greenhouse gases.

This year the General Assembly twice had to convene an emergency session to consider the extremely serious situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Unilateral actions have negated the Oslo peace process. This impasse must now be broken. The recent diplomatic effort by the United States Secretary of State, Mrs. Madeleine Albright, seems to have averted a total deadlock. It is essential that the protagonists start talking to each other again.

We view with serious concern the recent events in the Islamic Federal Republic of Comoros, which have resulted in the loss of human lives on the Island of Anjouan. We appeal to all the parties to the conflict to show restraint and to strive together towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis. We reaffirm our support to the United Nations stand on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Comoros. We also welcome the constructive role played by the OAU and the League of Arab States in mediating between the various parties. We look forward to an early convening of the proposed international conference in Addis Ababa for the restoration of peace in the Islamic Federal Republic of Comoros.

The situation in Burundi continues to preoccupy the international community. We support the Arusha peace initiative and reiterate our confidence in Mwalimu Nyerere's role as facilitator in the process aimed at finding a lasting solution to the Burundi crisis.

Later this year, we will kick off the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of one of the most important seminal documents adopted by this body — the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. During the year leading to this landmark event, Mauritius will work together with all Member States in promoting and strengthening the human rights situation everywhere, especially in the communities to which we are more closely associated through shared history and culture, namely the Commonwealth and the community of French-speaking countries.

The promotion of human rights has been an article of faith for my Government. It is also an integral part of our foreign policy. In this respect we welcome the setting up of the Indian Ocean Institute of Human Rights and Democracy in Mauritius for the promotion of human rights and democracy. We pledge our full support to this Institute. Human rights for all, including women and children, and democratic values are matters of universal concern.

As a multi-ethnic democracy, Mauritius has always raised its voice strongly against discrimination based on race, religion, culture and otherwise. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the recent developments in Fiji, which has finally decided to amend its Constitution in order to promote social harmony. We hope that the Government of Fiji will tackle the remaining issues standing in the way of the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and basic economic security by all segments of the population of Fiji.

Mr. Zacharakis (Greece), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mauritius reaffirms its full commitment to total disarmament and urges the world community to make every effort to rid itself of all weapons of mass destruction. It is in this spirit that Mauritius was among the first countries to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention and the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. We also reaffirm our support for the Ottawa initiative for a universal ban on anti-personnel landmines. It is regrettable that some major countries have decided to stay out of this process. We make a strong appeal to all Governments to become part of this unique and historic endeavour to eliminate landmines.

(spoke in French)

Allow me to take this opportunity to reaffirm the fact that my country, Mauritius, a former French island, belongs to the great community of French-speaking countries. This sense of belonging culminated with the holding in 1993 of the sixth summit of the French-speaking countries, whose central theme was "Unity in diversity", and which celebrated not only the universal values of the French-speaking countries but also made it possible for us to enshrine those same values in our society. Our people, who come from Africa, Asia and Europe, have deep roots in all the great cultures that form the French-speaking community. My compatriots can, in the course of one day, travel through all these cultures, one after another.

It is for that reason that my country attaches such great importance to the Francophone plan of promoting diversity in a world that is increasingly unipolar and

uniform. The upcoming summit in Hanoi will mark a very important stage in the future of this French-speaking community, providing it with the effective political means to make its voice heard on major international issues.

(spoke in English)

This Assembly is by now well aware of the just and legitimate claim of Mauritius to the restoration of its territorial integrity through the return of the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, to its national heritage. This Assembly should also note that this issue also has a tragic human dimension. Before Mauritius acceded to its independence, all of the inhabitants of the Chagos were forced to leave the land of their birth, where they had lived for several generations. The plight of those inhabitants must now be comprehensively addressed.

Likewise, we are still awaiting the return of the island of Tromelin to Mauritius. As we pursue our efforts to recover these territories, we call upon the former colonial Powers to expedite this process through dialogue in the spirit of the friendship that characterizes our relationships. My Government looks forward to an early resolution of these disputes.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lesotho, His Excellency Mr. Kelebone Maope.

Mr. Maope (Lesotho): Allow me to extend to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko the sincere congratulations of my delegation on his election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. It is with great pleasure that I assure him of Lesotho's support and cooperation as he conducts the deliberations of this body. Let me also take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, for the skilful manner in which he guided the work of the fifty-first session. My delegation truly appreciates his leadership and tireless dedication to the heavy responsibilities entrusted to him during the past year.

On the eve of a new millennium, the United Nations is poised on the threshold of an era of momentous changes. During the first 52 years of its existence, the Organization witnessed several changes in the configuration of international relations. Some of them were traumatic, others benign. The survival of the United Nations through all these tribulations bears testimony not only to its resilience, but also to the enduring validity of its mission.

But the continued success and relevance of the United Nations in the new millennium will depend in large measure on its capacity for self-renewal and on its readiness to meet its challenges in the environment of changed global circumstances.

The Secretary-General has demonstrated his willingness and resolve to bring about the much-needed change. We applaud, at the outset, his bold and far reaching proposals on the reform of the United Nations. Many of his proposals, indeed, meet with the approval of my Government, and it is our hope that the General Assembly will see its way clear to receiving them in the same manner. Some, however, do need careful scrutiny to ensure that the ideal of cost-cutting can still be achieved without compromising the overriding objective of realizing higher efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization in the execution of its mandate.

We urge that the totality of these proposals should be subjected to serious scrutiny at the appropriately high intergovernmental level, with a view to implementing those that enjoy wide support as expeditiously as possible. Our hope is that this can be done in a spirit of frankness and mutual understanding without the acrimony that so often characterizes our intergovernmental deliberations.

During the last two sessions of the General Assembly, we have debated and arrived at a clear understanding of the United Nations reforms that will best serve the interests of the world community in the next millennium. The reform initiatives of the Secretary-General, which cover diverse aspects of the functioning of the Organization, are therefore a timely and welcome response to our collective call for a reoriented and revitalized United Nations.

Lesotho, like other States of southern Africa, has gone through difficult political problems, which have largely been resolved. The outstanding problem is economic underdevelopment. We thus attach great importance to the United Nations role in development cooperation. We recognize the need to strengthen the capacity of the Secretary-General in this area by providing him with a deputy whose principal role, in our view, should be to coordinate the Organization's efforts and to give direction to all entities of the United Nations involved in development cooperation.

We fully support the initiative aimed at facilitating the unified and cooperative functioning of all the United

Nations funds and programmes involved in development operations at the field level, while at the same time reinforcing and maintaining the distinct nature of these entities. The specialized funds and programmes within the United Nations system continue to constitute an important vehicle for advancing international development cooperation, particularly in the developing countries. The enhanced coordination and pooling of resources and services among the specialized funds will not only lead to better planning but will also maximize programme impact and minimize administrative costs.

Indeed, Lesotho has already made its own contribution, however small, towards reaching the ideal of a unified United Nations presence in the field. The Government of Lesotho, using its own national resources, has constructed a United Nations House office complex, which will accommodate all field representatives of the funds and programmes as well as other United Nations agencies in our capital. This House was inaugurated and handed over to the United Nations Resident Coordinator only five days ago, on 25 September 1997.

The suggestion by the Secretary-General for the establishment of a $1 billion revolving fund also has its own merits. Let me, however, hasten to emphasize that there can be no substitute for a demonstrable commitment by all Member States to honour their treaty obligations by paying their assessed contributions on time, fully and unconditionally, in order to ensure the financial health of our Organization. We nevertheless believe that the proposed revolving fund can only be a short-term palliative. But such a fund should serve neither to exculpate those who renege on their treaty obligations nor to place an additional burden on countries that are already making sacrifices to honour their obligations in accordance with the Charter.

As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1998, the issue of the protection of human rights is assuming an increasing importance to all our countries because of its close linkage with democracy, peace and stability. My Government therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's proposed reforms regarding the strengthening of the Organization's role in the field of human rights. In this connection, we wish to urge that the consolidation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights into one entity should not lead to the blurring of the distinction between the political functions of the High Commissioner and the purely technical functions of the Centre.

The increasing globalization of organized crime, including trafficking in illicit drugs, continues to be a source of concern to the international community. It is for this reason that in our subregion, the countries of the Southern African Development Community are taking cooperative measures to combat the scourge of transnational organized crime. Lesotho believes that the proposal to establish in Vienna a high-profile United Nations office whose main focus would be on drug control and crime prevention should be given favourable consideration.

With regard to the reform and restructuring of the Security Council, I can only reaffirm the view of the Lesotho Government that only equitable representation on the Security Council and an increase in its membership to no less than 26 can satisfy our aspirations. We share the view held by the majority of members of this body on the need for true democratization of the Security Council and the reform of its working methods, including the issue of the veto power. Such reform should take into account the principle of sovereign equality of States, as well as the need for transparency and accountability in the decision-making processes of the Security Council.

Since the last session of the General Assembly, we have witnessed a number of developments in the international arena that augur well for world political stability and peace. Recently we all shared in the universal joy at the peaceful reunification of Hong Kong with its motherland. The United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China ought to be congratulated for their significant contribution to world peace and for the valuable lesson that they have imparted to the world community in the sphere of resolution of disputes through dialogue.

In our region, we have witnessed the birth of a new Democratic Republic of the Congo from the crucible of one of the most vicious dictatorships ever recorded in the annals of history. It is now for the international community to assist the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in their efforts aimed at economic reconstruction and the consolidation of democracy and accountability in their country. The acceptance of the Democratic Republic of the Congo into the Southern African Development Community at the beginning of this month was a signal of the determination of the countries of southern Africa to make their own positive contribution to the reconstruction efforts of the Congolese people.

We are also greatly encouraged by the recent restoration of stability and democracy in Liberia through the assistance of neighbouring countries in that region.

However, the reversion of Sierra Leone to a state of anarchy and chaos after the selfless efforts made by the international community to bring about stability in that country remains a source of great concern. Lesotho joins in the call by African States for the international community to withhold recognition of the military junta in Sierra Leone and to remain steadfast in its resolve to restore democracy and constitutional legitimacy in that country.

In Angola, the recalcitrance of the UNITA leadership continues to unravel the gains that had been made in the search for peace. The United Nations owes it to the people of Angola to enforce, through the Security Council, appropriate punitive measures against UNITA as a signal that those who stand in the way of peace can no longer be allowed to succeed.

The recent events in the Middle East have cast a shadow on a future that seemed to hold promise for a negotiated peace. False moves have escalated tension in the region rather than abating it. We call upon Israel, as we have always done in the past, to fully implement all Security Council resolutions aimed at the peaceful settlement of the conflict in that region. All the parties to the conflict must recommit themselves to the peace process and refrain from any acts which might jeopardize a negotiated settlement.

The continuous eruption of armed conflicts throughout the world, particularly in the developing countries, is a source of concern to all of us. These conflicts put a tremendous strain on the resources of the United Nations and on the Organization's capacity to maintain international peace and security. Thus, we are encouraged by the positive attitude and the interest that some of the developed countries have in the recent years shown in cooperating with the Organization of African Unity towards enhancing Africa's capacity in the field of conflict prevention. We also welcome Japan's initiative to host an international conference on conflict prevention in Tokyo in January 1998. Taken in their totality, these initiatives underline the moral responsibility that rests on humanity to ensure that peoples everywhere enjoy the right to peace, development and the sanctity of life.

Lesotho is generally encouraged by the progress that is being made in the field of disarmament with the recent signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Despite the current relaxation of tension in international relations, disarmament must continue to be accorded high priority on the agenda of the international community with a view to achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Africa has already contributed positively to the disarmament process by the signing, in Egypt, of the Pelindaba Treaty declaring Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The recent international negotiations in Oslo regarding a ban on anti-personnel mines are also a step in the right direction. Lesotho fully supports the Ottawa process and urges all nations to associate themselves with it so that a truly global treaty banning the production and use of anti-personnel mines can be successfully concluded in December this year.

Last year, the Assembly demonstrated the widespread and growing international support for a permanent international criminal court when it unanimously adopted resolution 51/207, which set mid-1998 as the date for a diplomatic conference to finalize and adopt a convention on the establishment of such a court. We have been encouraged by the progress made during the last two sessions of the Preparatory Committee, held in February and in August.

We appreciate the generous offer by the Italian Government to host the conference. The time has now come for the necessary arrangements for the convening of such a conference to be put in place, and reaffirming the June 1998 date will enable the Italian Government to proceed with the necessary logistical arrangements and ensure that the court is established before the end of the century. Lesotho fully and unreservedly supports that date. We remain convinced that the early establishment of the court will offer the advantage of a system that aims to serve the common global good by preventing local outbreaks of violence from becoming security crises with global repercussions, and to deter the continued recurrence of the genocide and other massive crimes against humanity that have haunted the world since Nuremberg and Tokyo.

Members will recall the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD IX), held two years ago in South Africa, whose main agenda item was on promoting growth and sustainable development in a globalizing and liberalizing economy. In the post-UNCTAD-IX period, a major

challenge before us is to maximize the developmental impact of this globalizing and liberalizing world economy. This can be achieved only by ensuring that the risk of marginalizing and even excluding weaker nations from participating actively in international trade and commerce is avoided at all costs.

When we met during the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, held only four months ago, we all expressed our deep concern that, compared to 1992, the overall trend regarding sustainable development in developing countries is worse today. Poverty and environmental degradation continue to afflict the lives of millions of people in many parts of the world. The staggering statistics only underline the need to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to improve the lot of our disadvantaged peoples. In particular, they reaffirm that United Nations operational activities for development have a critical and unique role to play in enabling the developing countries to continue to lead the management of their own development process, and that the funds and programmes within the United Nations system continue to constitute important vehicles for advancing international development cooperation. It is in this spirit that we would support those efforts that are aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and the capacity of the funds and programmes in the area of development assistance.

In conclusion, allow me to observe that with the vision that the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has brought to the Organization within his short period in office, the United Nations can and will come to terms with the challenges that lie in the years ahead. The rationalization of the structures and working methods of our Organization will surely allow us to achieve our objectives.

The Acting President: The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Kassymjomart Tokaev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Tokaev (Kazakhstan): First of all, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to his high office, which convincingly proves that the international prestige of Ukraine, one of the founders of the United Nations, is widely recognized. For the current session, which is being held in the spirit of renewal of this world forum, it is very symbolic.

I also with to express our appreciation to the previous President, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his considerable contribution to the successful work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

Kazakhstan believes that in the twenty-first century the United Nations should become a highly effective instrument that will help to make a smooth transition to real multipolarity, establish global economic partnership and democratize international relations. For our part, we stand ready to contribute to the adoption within the United Nations of important decisions on the urgent issues of today.

The Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has undertaken to carry out a daunting mission of reforming the Organization. Nothing could be harder than to live in times of change; it is all the harder to be the maker of the changes. This is why we are fully on the side of the man at the head of the United Nations, and we welcome his initiatives and his course of action. Kazakhstan supports the Secretary-General's proposals regarding a more efficient leadership and management structure, a new management culture and structural transformations within the Organization.

We support measures taken by the United Nations to ensure sustainable development. In our view, the proposed United Nations Development Group deserves endorsement. At the same time, it is important to preserve the independence and the distinctiveness of the funds and programmes that are being consolidated, especially the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a reputable organization that is doing so much for the sake of children, including its work in Kazakhstan.

The financial crisis of the United Nations is an urgent issue demanding a solution. The programme of reforms proposed by the Secretary-General provides for measures to redress the situation in which the Organization has found itself. There is no doubt that the improvement of the financial situation of the United Nations depends on the fulfilment by Member States of their obligations to the Organization. Despite the economic difficulties of the transition period, Kazakhstan is trying to honour its financial obligations. At the same time, we consider it imperative to further improve the scale of assessment on the basis of real ability to pay.

Kazakhstan, as one of the States that have joined the system of stand-by arrangements, supports the strengthening of the Organization's capacity to carry out preventive and peacekeeping activities. We welcome the

Secretary-General's proposals on the issues of disarmament and regulation of armaments, and we support his measures regarding human rights, organized crime, drugs and terrorism.

Kazakhstan is ready to join in efforts to strengthen the role of the General Assembly in dealing with burning international issues. Our country is in favour of convening a special "Millennium Assembly" in the year 2000. This idea is in consonance with President Nursultan Nazarbaev's initiative to convene on the eve of the twenty-first century a special session of the General Assembly devoted to reform.

In our opinion, United Nations reforms should be carried out in an integrated manner, at different levels and in different directions. At the same time, it is impossible to ignore that the key element of these reforms is the reform of the Security Council itself. Kazakhstan has repeatedly declared its support for Germany and Japan as candidates for permanent membership of the Council. Supporting the enlargement of the Council in both categories of its members, we believe it is possible to include as its permanent members representatives of the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America in order to ensure a balance of interests and an adequate reflection of existing geopolitical realities. It is important to keep in mind, however, that to preserve the Security Council's efficiency, the number of its members should be limited. At the same time, we think it is necessary to show proper respect and to pay attention to other proposals coming from other States.

Kazakhstan has on several occasions used this high rostrum to stress the need to strengthen the United Nations activities in the area of the environment. For our country these activities have special importance. For this reason, addressing the nineteenth special session of the United Nations General Assembly last June, the President of Kazakhstan once again drew the attention of the international community to the acute environmental problems inherited by our country. I refer to ecological disaster areas of the Aral Sea and the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground.

The problem of the Aral Sea has a global dimension. Particles of salt sediments from this region have been found in Europe, as well as in the Arctic Ocean. The Aral Sea region is witnessing a disastrous shortage of fresh water, a worsening of the population's health and the degradation of the natural environment.

Some 470 nuclear explosions have been conducted at the Semipalatinsk testing ground, which used to be the largest in the world. Enormous damage has been caused to the health of the population and the natural environment. We believe that nuclear weapons represent a tragedy that affects all the peoples of the world. With that in mind, our Head of State has spoken about the responsibility of the nuclear Powers for the damage caused to the population and the natural environment of the States where nuclear tests were conducted. Such responsibility could be shouldered by setting up an international fund for the rehabilitation of the health of the population and the environment of the regions affected by nuclear-weapon tests.

Our President's decision to close the Semipalatinsk testing ground should be considered as a major contribution to nuclear disarmament of historic significance. This month Kazakhstan hosted an international conference on nuclear non-proliferation, initiated by President Nazarbaev. Participants visited the former testing ground and became further convinced of the need to assist Kazakhstan, which is overcoming the consequences of nuclear tests conducted for more than half a century.

In this respect, the strengthening of environmental security has the highest priority for the region of Central Asia. Accordingly, at a meeting held in Almaty last February, the Heads of the Central Asian States adopted a Declaration proclaiming 1998 a Year of Environmental Protection in our region and highlighting the need to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We are grateful to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his support for the idea of establishing such a zone, in his message addressed to the participants in the Semipalatinsk conference.

As a party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, Kazakhstan is firmly committed to the non-proliferation regime, and considers it important to actively contribute to its further strengthening. Our State vigorously supports the objectives of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We believe that the signing of this document was one of the most important and historic events of this century, which is nearing its end. We call on all States to adhere to this Treaty.

Recognizing the importance of a deep reduction in the number of conventional weapons having indiscriminate effects, Kazakhstan took a decision to declare a moratorium, effective 6 August 1997, on the

export of anti-personnel mines, including the re-export and transit thereof.

Kazakhstan has taken consistent steps to strengthen security and stability at the regional level. Nursultan Nazarbaev's initiative to convene a Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, first put forward at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, is shaping up on the practical plane. We are planning to convene, in 1998, a meeting of Foreign Ministers of interested States to discuss security issues in Asia.

The formation of a Central Asian battalion under the auspices of the United Nations has become a factor of stability in the Central Asian region and provides clear evidence of the implementation of the proposal made by our Head of State. Recently, its first exercises were successfully conducted in Kazakhstan.

The signing of unique agreements between Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the People's Republic of China on confidence-building measures and the reduction of armed forces in the border region should be considered as a major achievement in the area of international security.

We note with satisfaction the signing in June of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, which represents a significant breakthrough in the settlement, under the auspices of the United Nations, of the longest-running conflict among the post-Soviet countries. Kazakhstan is one of the guarantors of the peace process in Tajikistan. We believe that all those concerned should ensure the adoption of practical measures to facilitate the implementation of the agreements concluded, the delivery of international humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction of the national economy.

We are seriously concerned by the continued armed confrontation in Afghanistan. We in Kazakhstan are convinced that peace in that country can be achieved through political negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations, between all the parties involved in this conflict in order to establish peace and form a Government of national unity in that country, which has suffered so much.

Kazakhstan, which is committed to the ideas of renewal, has firmly embarked on a course of economic reform and the democratization of social life. Reforms in our country have become irreversible. The privatization of the economy is being completed, the level of inflation has been steadily low, the national currency is stable and liquid, and for the first time in a little more than five years of independence we have registered economic growth. Kazakhstan is open to the outside world and offers considerable investment opportunities. Our State is leading the Commonwealth of Independent States in per capita foreign investments. We strongly believe that very soon Kazakhstan will firmly take its place in global integration processes and become a fully fledged member of major economic associations and organizations.

We should like to express our appreciation to the United Nations for its support for President Nazarbaev's proposal to create a joint body for Central Asia under two regional Commissions, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). In a few days' time, the heads of these Commissions will come to our country. A special ECE-ESCAP programme for Central Asian States is under way. A joint office of the two organizations is to be opened in Almaty.

I would like to make special mention of the activities of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Seven new States, including Kazakhstan, joined ECO not very long ago. Nevertheless, the ECO member States have managed to reach promising levels of cooperation and interaction. The declaration adopted at the ECO summit last May provides an opportunity to create new transportation corridors and routes to transport hydrocarbons, and the ECO member States, as well as many other countries in Asia and Europe, are equally interested in their development.

How the Organization will look when it enters the twenty-first century will depend on the decisions we take in the follow-up to our discussions of United Nations reform. Years ago, an enormous internal capacity was built into the United Nations Charter. The United Nations was designed for a world based on the principles of partnership and cooperation, not on all-out confrontation. Also important is the fact that the United Nations Charter, which might be called an institutional pillar of the Organization, is a highly balanced document, free of any visible bias in one direction or another, and this has allowed it to become, one might say, a code of modern international relations that no civilized State has any right to ignore. The decisions that are being taken should be as balanced as possible and should not amount to stop-gap

and ad hoc measures. That is one of the main demands with regard to United Nations reform.

The United Nations should come out of the reform process renewed, more effective and more efficient.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, Her Excellency Ms. Andrea Willi.

Ms. Willi (Liechtenstein): On behalf of the Liechtenstein Government, I should like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I wish also to express my thanks and recognition to the Permanent Representative of Malaysia, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the dynamic way in which he conducted the work of the fifty-first session. Further, I should like to pay tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, our new Secretary-General. In the first nine months of his tenure, and at a particularly decisive time for the United Nations, he has shown great leadership qualities. I wish to assure him of our full support and cooperation.

We live in a world that is more interdependent than ever before. Globalization implies that Governments and societies can best meet such global challenges as democracy, the eradication of poverty, the promotion and protection of human rights, sustainable development, humanitarian emergencies and refugee problems if they take action together. International problems require international solutions, and the world community must work together to deal with them on the basis of international law, through a constructive dialogue of the international community as a whole.

This leads me to our Organization, which is a unique — indeed, the only — forum for such cooperation, and to the deep and far-reaching reform proposals which the Secretary-General, after a first reform package submitted in March, presented in his report (A/51/950) of 14 July 1997. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has taken on the challenging task of reform with the necessary combination of energy and circumspection. I wish first of all to state that we welcome the report and will lend our full support to achieving its objectives. I hope that the reform process will lead to concrete results before the end of this year. We share the opinion of those countries that have stressed that reform must not be a cost-cutting exercise but a matter of strengthening the role of the Organization as an active and effective world forum.

We welcome and support the Secretary-General's proposal to establish the post of a Deputy Secretary-General who will have a particular role in ensuring the success of activities and programmes that cross functional sectors and Secretariat units. We particularly support the Secretary-General's suggestion to fill that post with a qualified woman. We also welcome the proposal to replace the Department of Humanitarian Affairs with an Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and we hope that this measure will bring about the necessary changes to ensure a more efficient coordination of United Nations activities in this very important field.

The Secretary-General has also suggested integrating human rights into all the principal activities of the United Nations, and we are fully supportive of this approach because it reflects the comprehensive and cross-cutting nature of human rights. We are gratified to see Mrs. Mary Robinson in her new post as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We wish her success in her challenging tasks and pledge to her our full support. We are confident that her appointment will give additional momentum to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide and that the consolidation of her Office with the Centre for Human Rights will provide her with a solid institutional basis from which to take on her principal responsibility for United Nations human rights activities. That will be possible, however, only if the underfunding of human rights programmes that we have witnessed for so long finally comes to an end. Human rights are the legitimate concern of the international community, and this should be reflected in the appropriation of sufficient funds from the regular budget.

We also continue to be very concerned about the precarious overall financial situation of the Organization, which is obviously linked to the failure of some Member States to fulfil their obligations regarding the prompt and full payment of their assessed financial contributions. It is important to note that the best reform efforts will be seriously hampered unless the Organization's finances are put in order.

Since we last met in New York for the general debate at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, major — indeed, crucial — efforts have been undertaken to eliminate anti-personnel landmines. This matter has become a truly global cause, promoted by individuals and non-governmental organizations worldwide and propelled by Governments, which have committed themselves to the Ottawa process to achieve a global ban on landmines. This is of exemplary value. Liechtenstein remains

committed to the elimination of anti-personnel landmines, and we therefore wholeheartedly support the results of the negotiations that were concluded recently at Oslo. We are particularly pleased that it was possible to agree on a final text which is simple, with no exceptions, no reservations and no loopholes. We are of the opinion that only such a treaty can bring us closer to the goal of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have made outstanding efforts in the course of the Ottawa process, particularly the Governments of Canada, Austria, Belgium and Norway, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

While the adoption of the treaty will constitute a milestone in the history of both disarmament and international humanitarian law, further steps will be needed, and the participation of as many States as possible in the meeting which will bring the process back to Ottawa in December will be a crucial element in those efforts. Liechtenstein plans to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and is committed to its ratification at the earliest possible date.

The establishment of an international criminal court is another area in which we have been able to make significant progress over the past year, and we are approaching the date of the diplomatic conference at which the statute of the court will be adopted. We wholeheartedly support the establishment of the international criminal court, which will constitute a milestone in the history of international law, and we continue to believe that that court has to be strong and independent if it is to make an effective contribution to the protection of human rights and the observance of international humanitarian law. It is of crucial importance that the General Assembly agree at this session on the precise dates for the diplomatic conference and that that decision allow for the fullest possible participation by small States, which have a particular interest in this matter.

Two years ago, we adopted the Declaration and Platform of Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Initiatives and actions have been taken towards the implementation of these commitments. The Liechtenstein Government has since taken a number of appropriate measures, while a comprehensive package containing detailed further action is presently being prepared.

The role of women in preventive diplomacy and in peacekeeping and the persistent absence of women from peace negotiations are of particular concern to my delegation. The more active participation of women in conflict resolution should be promoted, since women bring different perspectives and innovative approaches to preventive diplomacy as well as to peacekeeping. The equal access and full participation of women in decision-making at all levels and in power structures, including challenging assignments, such as serving as special representatives of the Secretary-General, are also important in the area of the promotion and maintenance of peace and security.

Special attention should be given to the situation of women in armed conflicts, including refugee women. Women are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and human rights violations, both before they flee and as refugees. In the Beijing Platform of Action, the need to provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women and displaced women is clearly recognized.

Liechtenstein first introduced in 1991 an initiative on the right of self-determination, the ultimate goal of which is to enable States facing internal problems — be they between the central Government and communities or between communities within States — to cope with these problems in a peaceful and flexible manner on the basis of international law and through constructive dialogue. Ever since, we have consolidated and further developed our ideas, and we would like to thank all those who have given us active support in this endeavour.

At the end of October, the Liechtenstein Research Program in Self-Determination at the Woodrow Wilson School of Princeton University will continue its series of conferences devoted to issues of self-government and self-administration. I would like to renew to all here our invitation to attend the next conference, which will take place from 31 October to 1 November. We hope that this conference will provide a deeper understanding of the complex issues underlying the concept of self-determination, which has played such an outstanding role in the history of our Organization. We hope that this initiative can be a positive contribution to the future work of the United Nations.

The capacity of the United Nations to deal with the challenges of the future, however, will depend on our decisions on the reform of the Organization, decisions which we have to take now. Today, I wish to renew Liechtenstein's commitment to the principles and

purposes of the United Nations. We are willing to contribute to the extent possible so that this chance to renew the United Nations will not pass us by.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Chairman of the Delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, His Excellency Mr. Abuzed Omar Dorda.

Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to express to Mr. Udovenko, on behalf of my country's delegation, our warm congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. His election to that high post is a tribute of the international community to his friendly country and a reflection of the confidence of the Members of the United Nations in his ability to shoulder this heavy responsibility.

By the same token, we express our great appreciation to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for the great efficiency with which he conducted the affairs and deliberations of the Assembly at its previous session. Furthermore, I wish on this occasion to express my country's gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the unrelenting efforts he has made since his assumption of his post to enhance the role, efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations.

Some people have thought that the end of the so-called cold war would be conducive to the creation of favourable conditions for equitable and healthy international relations based on mutual respect and fruitful and constructive cooperation among human communities. However, what the Secretary-General has rightly described as a period of "frenzy" has not taken long to lay such assumptions to rest and wreak havoc in several regions of the world. This frenzy is the product of the new unipolar system in which one country sits alone on the top. This singularity has emboldened that country to continue to spread its hegemony, expand the area and scope of its aggression and impose its conditions, concerned only with its own interests and ignoring those of others. It has even fought against the interests of its own allies. Those who have exposed these trends and refused to pay homage and obeisance except to God have been labelled outlaws.

The end of the so-called cold war deprived the world of that balance of power which had, in the past, provided a protective umbrella for all small, poor and weak countries. It has even protected other countries as well. The most important need on the international scene today is to work seriously to establish any kind of international balance to preserve the little that has remained of States' independence, freedom of thought and action, and then to reverse the negative effects of the period of frenzy, which is still with us, although it has somewhat receded.

The United Nations has been manipulated by the only super-Power, which sits alone at the top, against certain peoples, States and even regions that have joined this Organization in search of protection, security, peace and cooperation. The United States of America has managed to push the Security Council into adopting resolutions outside its competence against whoever has said "no" to unilateral hegemony and tyranny or defended the independence of their countries and their ability to take free decisions and have free choices. These resolutions adopted at the height of the period of frenzy at the beginning of this decade were falsely described as being consistent with international legality, while in reality there was nothing legal or international about them. They were adopted through *diktat* and by the use of threats directed at the capitals of the States concerned in order to ensure their continued applicability.

Paragraphs 102 and 103 of the report of the Secretary-General on the reform process (A/51/950) clearly and unequivocally show that these resolutions not only lack international legality but also that they should be reviewed and rescinded.

Globalization which means only the imposition of the interests, language, culture, values and customs of the one and only Power at the top is not globalization. It is merely a crowning of that Power as head of the entire world. Proof of this can be found in the great contradiction between words and deeds. Its leaders call for the liberalization of international trade, then enact legislation imposing one embargo after another on the movement of goods and capital against those countries and peoples that want to remain independent and free in their decision-making. They punish, through their own legislation, whoever in the world cooperates with it.

What was published today in *The New York Times* regarding cooperation between a company located in a State which is an ally of the United States, and Iran is the clearest evidence of the truth of what we are stating.

They are the ones who dictate economic embargo resolutions against countries and peoples and then unilaterally follow up their implementation. Moreover, it is these same quarters that work to disarm countries and selectively destroy whatever weapons they have, while

allowing only themselves and their allies, to the exclusion of everyone else, to manufacture, possess and acquire armaments. The same quarters provide money, men, technology, and know-how to a select group of countries in order that they may establish and develop a military industry capable of producing all types of conventional weapons and even weapons of mass destruction, and if necessary would send their armies and fleets to fight at their sides.

They call for the protection of human rights while refusing to acknowledge human rights for anybody but their own people. This is the case in the denial of the right of the two Libyan citizens to a fair and neutral trial.

It is the same country that calls for the combating of terrorism and then goes on to label self-defence, the defence of honour and resistance against foreign occupiers, as terrorism. They call for democracy and then support and finance those who oppose democracy, especially if those who come to power are against the influence in their country of the only super-Power.

These examples of the contradiction between words and deeds, between propaganda and the executive policies and legislative positions of the very same Power, clearly show that the call for globalization is not intended for the good of the world. In reality the world reaps nothing but a name.

The African continent, which is considered the most underdeveloped part of the world as we stand at the end of the twentieth century, is not, in fact, responsible for its backwardness. A brief review of Africa's history and a discerning look at its present state of affairs readily show that all the problems, without exception, Africa faces — whether they be problems of political instability in some of its regions or economic underdevelopment in most, if not all, its countries — are caused by those who colonized and drew the political borders of the African countries.

Not one single African country has drawn its own borders with its neighbours. It was the colonial countries which did that, dividing tribes, clans and communities among different countries and thus sowing the seeds of the current social tensions in many parts of the continent at an early time. This was a deliberate act carried out under the infamous policy of "divide and rule".

Not only did they draw the borders, but they also looted the natural resources, which they now monopolize. Any country that dares to free its resources is quickly surrounded by embargoes. They use all the financial and economic institutions, including the so-called international institutions, in a manner that deprives these countries of any choice but to surrender to their conditions or face the consequences of confronting them. The responsibility for what happened during the past epoch and for what continues to occur in our African continent should be shouldered by those who caused it in the first place.

The slogan "Africa should help itself", though seemingly innocent, is misleading, because it involves an attempt at avoiding the responsibility for the consequences of the acts of those who sowed the seeds of all this in the not-so-distant past. This is still fresh in the memory of current generations. Those who do care for Africa do not impose conditions for assisting Africa. Africa is ready to cooperate with those who are willing to help, but cannot accept dealing with those who dictate to it.

My country would like to endorse the position outlined here in the General Assembly and at the Security Council meeting devoted to Africa by President Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). This is the position of all Africa and all Africans. From this rostrum, my country salutes President Mugabe. We confirm what he said: Africa does not ask for charity from anybody.

We urge those who seek permanent membership in the Security Council to remember Africa all the time, and not only when they need the votes of its countries in the General Assembly to help them take over posts and seats in various councils and committees. We urge them, and others, to review the standards and criteria for their relations with the African countries before it is too late.

Allow me to recall what one of Africa's leaders said 15 years ago. His country used to export one ton of cocoa in order to import one tractor. Now it has to export 12 tons of cocoa in order to import one tractor. This astronomical increase in the price of manufactured goods compared with the price of raw materials in the space of 15 years is a sufficient reply to all the questions raised about the relationships of others with Africa in various fields. This very example explains some of the causes of the suffering in several African countries, at various levels.

We would like to say here to both old and new colonialists alike: Hands off Africa, then Africa will know how to help itself.

The truth of what we have been saying all along concerning the Palestinian question has been proved to everybody. Everyone here has seen and heard about the practices of the Israeli occupation authorities in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories, from the Golan to southern Lebanon, or rather, all of Lebanon. The Security Council held meetings to consider the situation in these territories, but those meetings were aborted by the American veto. The General Assembly held a special session on the matter, and what was the result? Nothing. This would explain what the region is facing these days, and what is in gestation now is even more dangerous than what is being witnessed today.

The Iraqi people are not only starving and dying; they are suffering from something more serious than hunger and more dangerous than death. It is known that some Iraqi individuals have been forced to sell body parts, such as kidneys, to feed their children for a little while. What kind of international legality can justify the continued application of sanctions that lead to such results? How can any claims be accepted now from those who pay lip service to so-called human rights, yet do not apply them except to serve their political ends? How is it then possible to allow the partition of Iraq and the violation of the inviolability of its borders and its territory by foreigners and their armed forces? It is the United Nations which is responsible for this situation, since it created the conditions that led to this situation and has provided the cover for what is happening in Iraq. It is now the United Nations responsibility to redress this situation to which it has given rise.

My country overlooks the Mediterranean, with a coast that extends for about 2,000 kilometres. That is why we are very keen on making the Mediterranean a lake of peace and cooperation for its coastal States. However, this is made impossible by the presence of foreign military bases and foreign fleets that undermine the region's stability and represent a permanent source of danger. This presence has been the cause of our continued concern, because we have sacrificed half our population for our freedom. Three times a year, we celebrate the anniversaries of the evacuation of foreign troops from our country. Peace, stability and cooperation in the Mediterranean will be possible only when foreign military bases are eliminated, when foreign fleets are withdrawn from its waters.

My country, like the rest of the developing world, welcomes the international conventions aimed at the prohibition and elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We believe that this is in the interest of mankind as a whole. However, the resumption of nuclear tests, under any pretext, is a great source of disappointment because they are a violation of the international conventions concluded in this field. The possession by Tel Aviv of nuclear weapons has placed the entire eastern Arab region under a direct threat, constant dangers and definite instability.

Without technical and financial support, without the experts and scientists who are part and parcel of this support, such weapons would not have been produced in the region. It is well known — indeed, it has been declared — that tests are now being conducted on long-range missiles that could deliver these weapons of mass destruction to their targets in Arab and Muslim lands alike. Tests are also being conducted on anti-missile missiles, as part of the strategic cooperation between Washington and Tel Aviv.

On the other hand, all Iraqi weapons have been destroyed. Preparations are being made to destroy all the weapons of the Arabs and Muslims, who are helpless and whose territories are occupied. Alliances are being forged to surround the Arabs and Muslims so as to prevent them from ever becoming powerful and so as to secure for Washington their oil, their gas and their markets.

This is the truth, however bitter it may be for us Arabs and Muslims to swallow. My country would like to alert the world to the real sources of danger, not the fictitious ones — that is, those being used to fabricate causes and pretexts to justify the destruction and recolonization of the rest of the world.

It is not Libya, nor Syria, nor Iraq, nor Iran nor the Sudan which constitute any danger, by any measure, to the security of the region or the security and peace of the world. The real danger to international peace and security lies in Washington and Tel Aviv, and those who emulate them. They both possess and manufacture weapons of mass destruction. Washington manufactures them and Washington exports them. This is while the countries to which I have referred do not manufacture weapons and, moreover, have been prevented by America from importing any such weapons. America has imposed an international arms embargo against those countries. It has destroyed Iraqi weapons, and is now preparing to destroy

the conventional and even the obsolete weapons possessed by others.

This is the law of the United States against which these countries have rebelled. Thus they were labelled "rogues". This is the new and old form of discrimination. This is the newest form of anti-Semitism.

We call for emptying the region of the Arab East of weapons of mass destruction, which Tel Aviv owns. The plants that manufacture these weapons should be subjected to international safeguards and controls. We also call for investigating the financial and technical support that enabled Tel Aviv to produce these weapons. We must criminalize this support and those who provide it. The agreements of military strategic cooperation between Washington and Tel Aviv are hostile instruments, targeting the region as a whole and its peoples. This provides evidence of the real intentions of the United States towards the region and its peoples, voids its allegations and argumentations with respect to disarmament and reveals its intentions.

We highlight these issues to show the world the extent of the injustice to which we have been subjected and to what extent the United States of America is deceiving everybody.

The United States used to have five military bases in my country. It had monopolized the production and export of Libyan oil and gas. The United Kingdom also had a number of military bases in Libya. Through its own company, British Petroleum, it also produced and exported our oil.

With the advent of the revolution of 1 September 1969, Libya immediately evacuated the military bases of those two countries and later liberated its oil wealth from their companies.

However, under international conditions that the Secretary-General has rightly called a period of frenzy, the two countries thought that the time was ripe for a return to what they were forced to relinquish and to regain control of the 2,000-kilometre-long Libyan coastline, adjacent to the three old continents of Africa, Asia and Europe. They believed the time was ripe to regain control of my country's oil, gas and market, as well as neighbouring markets. Once finished with the Gulf War, they turned their attention to Libya. However, the two countries were unable to find a pretext to realize their ambition of a new return to Libya except by resorting to allegations, which came to be known later as the Lockerbie case.

What is the real truth about Lockerbie? In brief, and precisely, it is as follows. First, both the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain are aware, more than anybody else, that Libya has nothing whatever to do with this aeroplane and the tragic incident that killed its passengers and crew.

Second, both the United States of America and the United Kingdom claim that two Libyans placed a time bomb in a bag on board a Maltese Airlines flight that took off from Malta, and that the bag was unaccompanied baggage. They claim that this very bag, which was not accompanied by a passenger, was transferred in Frankfurt airport from the Maltese Airlines aeroplane to an American aeroplane destined for London. Once again, they say, this same bag was transferred in London airport from the aircraft originating in Frankfurt to Pan Am Flight 103, which later took off from London and exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Can the Assembly imagine how an unaccompanied bag can move by itself from one airplane to another and from one airport to another with such accuracy?

Third, the Government of Malta investigated the matter and found that there were no unaccompanied bags on the flight in question. Malta announced the results of the investigation at the time.

Fourth, the competent authorities in Germany, in turn, investigated the question and found nothing to corroborate the story about the bag.

Fifth, in any case, my country, despite the known objectives of the authors of the accusation, dealt seriously and pragmatically with the accusation. We informed all concerned parties that we had begun implementation of the provisions of the 1971 Montreal Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation. The legal authorities in Libya began exercising their legal jurisdiction in accordance with that Convention.

Sixth, my country asked the two countries concerned to hand over to Libyan judicial authorities the results of their investigations so they could be used in our investigation. This request was rejected.

Seventh, my country then asked the two countries to send investigators to Libya to participate in the investigation. Once again they refused.

Eighth, my country then offered to send its judicial officials to meet with the competent authorities in both the United States and the United Kingdom to peruse the file on this question. This offer was turned down.

Ninth, Libya also offered to let a neutral party or parties to carry out the investigation. The two countries refused that offer.

Tenth, once again, my country proposed that the United Nations should carry out the investigation. That proposal was rejected.

Eleventh, in a letter addressed to the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom and the United States Secretary of State by the Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation, my country requested that article 14 of the 1971 Montreal Convention be invoked. That request was refused.

Twelfth, Libya proposed resorting to the International Court of Justice to decide the case. That proposal was turned down by the other parties. And when my country unilaterally took the case to the International Court of Justice, the parties concerned quickly turned the whole issue from a legal to a political one, submitting it to the Security Council to prevent the International Court of Justice from deciding the case. Here we have the Security Council dealing with an issue pertaining to two citizens of a country. The issue is now five years old. So the issue is before the Security Council precisely to prevent the International Court of Justice from deciding the case since the matter was put before the Security Council, despite the fact that Libya, naturally, had resorted to the International Court of Justice before the matter was even referred to the Security Council.

This is how this legal question was politicized. When did that occur? This was done at the peak of the "frenzy" period, on 21 January 1992. Nobody at the time could say no to the United States of America. As we all know, the Security Council, under well-known and frankly recognized pressures, adopted resolution 731 (1992) which did not stipulate any surrender of the suspects, but requested a response to the demands of the countries concerned. I repeat, it did not provide for surrendering the suspects.

Thirteenth, my country has fully responded to the provisions of the resolution both in terms and content by cooperating with the United Kingdom on the question of the Irish Republican Army, and with the French investigating judge in all the demands he made. Furthermore, we agreed to a trial for the two Libyan suspects in a fair and neutral court.

Fourteenth, the aim of both the United States and the United Kingdom has not been to discover the real culprit in this regrettable and tragic airplane incident. They already know who the responsible party is. Their real objective has been to use the whole issue, including the human blood that was shed, to achieve their own political objectives which I have already elucidated. To achieve that end, they exploited the Security Council once again, pushing it to adopt resolution 748 (1992) which imposes a near total embargo on Libya and its dealings with the rest of the world. The Council also adopted resolution 883 (1993), which complemented the previous resolution.

Fifteenth, in the face of all this intransigence and arrogance, when all efforts and mediation failed to convince the two countries concerned to opt for dialogue and negotiations; since they had earlier unilaterally severed their diplomatic relations with my country; and because my country has no extradition treaty with either of the two countries, we resorted to regional and international organizations. Today, we would like to put on record, as always, our deepest appreciation to these organizations for their support and for their stand in favour of what is right. Those organizations, let us recall, represent more than two thirds of the international community.

We hasten to confirm that the other third is not against us; rather, its States are simply not members of those organizations. The League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement have all supported my country and expressed their appreciation for my country's flexibility in our handling of the issue, as well as for the positive initiatives we have proposed.

Sixteenth, the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity, through the Harare summit, under the chairmanship of President Robert Mugabe, have proposed that the trial of the two suspects be held in a neutral third country to be determined by the Security Council; that the two suspects be tried by Scottish judges, under Scottish law, at the seat of the

International Court of Justice in The Hague; or that a special criminal tribunal be established to try the two suspects at the seat of the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Seventeenth, both the Secretary-General of the Arab League and the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity came to United Nations Headquarters with the resolutions of their respective organizations in hand, resolutions that are supported by the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement. They submitted these resolutions to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the President of the Security Council and its member States. What was the reaction of the United States and the United Kingdom? Both rejected the requests made by other members of the Council and used the Council's work mechanism — so-called consensus — to reject all proposals submitted by their majesties and excellencies, the kings and presidents of the two organizations. Naturally, this was a shock to both regional organizations because they were fully and arrogantly ignored.

Eighteenth, on 25 September of this year, during the Security Council's ministerial meeting on Africa, the entire meeting became a forum for discussing the issue when it was raised by His Excellency President Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), in his address to the Council. Again, in the name of my country, its leader and people, I wish to express again our gratitude to President Mugabe for his honourable defence of the concerns and the causes of Africa as a whole, and in particular his defence of my country on this question.

The issue was also raised by His Excellency Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of OAU, and by most of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Council's members. As we express our gratitude to all of them, we wish to confirm that their support would have never been so forthcoming had we been wrong.

Nineteenth, about a week ago, the Council of the League of Arab States decided to call on Arab States to mitigate some of the impacts of the sanctions imposed on my country. We are grateful to the Council and to all our brothers. We realize that this is a step in the right direction and that it is but a mild reaction to their being ignored last July.

We ask you for justice. Members of the Security Council are not against my country. They have expressed that in all our meetings with them. They further add that our problem is with the United States and the United Kingdom. Our dispute is with the judge. How can anyone expect the Security Council to solve the problem when our adversaries are both permanent members of the Council and possess the veto power?

Once again, our problem is with the United States and the United Kingdom. We have no problem whatever with the Security Council, and the Security Council has no problem with us. Had these two countries accepted the proposals of the regional and international organizations, had they showed respect for the States members of these organizations and for their presidents and representatives, the Security Council would not have hesitated for one moment to accept them. This is what we were told by members of the Council. We are not just saying that.

My country calls on all of you to intervene so we can reach a peaceful solution to this dispute, one that would accelerate the holding of the trial for the two suspects before a fair and just court, in an atmosphere free from prior condemnation, in any place agreed upon, or decided upon by the Security Council.

The two suspects were advised by their American and Scottish lawyers against accepting a trial before any court in Scotland or the United States. This is because of intensive media coverage and statements by officials in the two countries which have created a climate and public opinion that have convicted them in advance of any trial. This does not accord with their human right to receive a just and fair trial. The fact that the United States Government has accorded Timothy McVeigh, accused in the Oklahoma explosion, the right to change the venue of his trial from Oklahoma, where the crime occurred, to another state — namely Colorado — is evidence of respect for one of the human rights — a respect which should not be restricted only to the citizens of the United States. This is because human rights should be enjoyed by all human beings, irrespective of their nationality. Human rights should not be accorded to some and denied to others.

My country, at all levels of official responsibility, has repeatedly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We have disassociated ourselves from all suspected terrorist practices. We have also repeatedly asked the Secretary-General and the Security Council to send a committee or envoys to ascertain on the ground the validity of our claims.

However, the refusal and objections of the United States prevented the Secretariat and the Security Council from responding to our requests. This is one of the main reasons why we have such strong suspicions about the true intentions of the United States against my country. This has also exposed its political objectives, for the attainment of which it did not hesitate to exploit human blood.

We call on the international community, as represented in this Assembly, to work towards reaching a solution as soon as possible.

The United States refusal to allow this side issue — "the question of terrorism" — to be closed is aimed at serving the particular objectives of that country, objectives we have already referred to. Everybody knows that it was the United States which more than once committed terrorist acts against my country, using its fleets and its bombers. The most heinous of these acts was the barbaric raid on the night of 15 April 1986 against the residence and office of the Libyan brother leader, and against other residential neighbourhoods in both Tripoli and Benghazi. In this raid, tens of children, women and elderly were martyred in their sleep. The United States cannot produce one shred of evidence to prove the so-called Libyan terrorism, whereas Libya has dozens of proofs of the terrorism perpetrated by the United States against Libya.

The raid made on the night of 15 April 1986 is not a suspected perpetration of an act, as is the case with our citizens who are suspected by the United States. The raid of 15 April 1986 is an established fact whose consequences can still be seen in the tombs of the martyrs in the famous El-Hani Cemetery and in the remnants of buildings that still clearly show the marks of bombs and rockets. And if all of this is far away in Tripoli and Benghazi, I am here before you and I personally stand as a proof of the terrorism of the United States. These scars here on my face and on my head, and on other parts of my body covered by my clothes, are the result of a bomb that an American aircraft dropped on my house, which was totally demolished that night. My young son, who was less than 10 years old at the time, was also injured.

We, who personally were victims of the American raid, resorted to the American judicial system here in the United States and brought a legal suit before an American court. Despite all the evidence, the American judicial system rejected our case. This negative experience with American justice would surely discourage anyone from accepting to be tried by such a judiciary, especially if the opposing party was the American Government. I personally tried to institute a lawsuit and had American lawyers. My house is destroyed and erased from the Tripoli map. I have scars on my face, yet the case was rejected. And now we are to trust it and send our citizens before it? How?

We cannot forget that crime. We will always call for those who decided, planned and implemented it to appear before competent Libyan courts for trial. The crime took place in my country. They say that a crime took place in Scotland? Fine. But another crime took place in Tripoli and Banghazi. Are their people citizens, and our people are not citizens? We are also citizens of our own nation-State. They have mere suspicions. We have facts not suspicions which were actually shown on American television screens.

We believe that the reform of the United Nations is of the utmost importance to us. However, optimum results of this reform cannot be achieved unless the financial situation of the Organization is put on the right track and, most importantly, Member States must pay their assessed contributions. The fact that the United States has reneged on its contractual commitments to the United Nations by not paying its assessed contribution to the budget is the cause of the financial crisis from which the Organization has suffered for years. If the United Nations is to be reformed, that State must pay all of its arrears without conditions and promise to pay in future, on time and without pressures that aim to make the United Nations a hostage of the will and policies of that country.

We know that that State is now pressuring members of the General Assembly to make up for the lowering of its contribution by 5 per cent. We know that nothing has been decided yet regarding changes of assessment or contributions. This is what we call sitting on top of this unipolar world. This is what we are warning the world of. We would not have known that had we not been told by those who are being pressured to pay the extra 5 per cent. The fact that they told us — the Libyans — clearly shows that they are dissatisfied and that they obviously are refusing. They cannot say no. But we can say no.

Within the framework of the reform process, it is essential to have a complete review of the situation of the Security Council. By virtue of our experience with the Security Council — an experience I have just commented on — we know and appreciate the importance and necessity of reforming the Security Council and expanding its membership. We believe that the reform

should focus first on improving the methods of work of the Council — its mechanisms — thus making it impossible for any one country to hamper the work of the Council or make it irrelevant.

My country, which a quarter of a century ago called for the abrogation of the veto power, would like to emphasize now that any reform of the Security Council that does not rescind the veto power would be meaningless. There is no longer any historical or objective reason for maintaining this power. It is not justifiable by any standard of righteousness, justice and equality, and even under the standards of democracy, to which certain countries pay lip service. At the same time, we believe that the reform process will not be useful if it does not take into consideration the interests of all countries and peoples.

That is why my country will support any initiative that would do away with the present imbalance in the membership of the Security Council. In this respect, we should like to underline the need to adhere to the proposals of the Non-Aligned Movement, which are based on full, sovereign equality among States; seek to apply the principle of equitable geographical distribution; and respond to the demands of the developing countries, which represent the majority of the Members of the United Nations.

The General Assembly is the United Nations organ that truly embodies the universal and democratic character of this international Organization. Since it is the only intergovernmental body with a mandate to discuss any question or matter under the Charter, including the maintenance of international peace and security, Libya would like to underline the wide-ranging and repeated calls for the need to invigorate the General Assembly and enhance its powers so as to increase its effectiveness in confronting the ever-changing challenges that face the international community.

Lastly, I wish to apologize for having taken up so much of the Assembly's time.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/52/PV.18

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-second Session

18th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 30 September 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I call first on the speaker Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Niger and for Persons of Niger Nationality Living Abroad, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki.

Mr. Mayaki (Niger) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the delegation of Niger, I should like Sir, to express my warm congratulations on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. We regard your election as a just tribute to your country, the Republic of Ukraine, whose commitment to the ideals of our Organization is well known.

I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau, who I am convinced will help you in the accomplishment of your delicate mission.

In addition, I wish to express to your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, our deep appreciation for the remarkable work he did during his presidency.

To Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of our Organization, may I express my Government's full support and brotherly encouragement for the commendable action he is carrying out in order to promote greater cooperation between our peoples and nations in order to build a world of peace and progress.

Once again, Niger is pleased to take part in a session of the General Assembly, which is an ideal framework for the Member States of our Organization to debate, in a spirit of partnership, complex matters affecting the destiny of humanity.

We must all agree that over its 52 years of existence the United Nations has gained a more than honourable record in achieving its purposes, especially in the areas of peacekeeping, decolonization, and the promotion of, and respect for, human rights, as well as in the search for global solutions to the major problems of our times — development, the environment, population and the protection of women and children, to mention just a few.

The immense work accomplished so far is above all the result of our capacity to work together in our common interest and in the interest of future generations. Niger therefore believes that international cooperation, which is the basis of these major achievements, must be strengthened, because it is the source of stability and progress.

The maintenance of international peace and security, the primary purpose of our Organization, deserves everyone's special attention at a time when the international community, with the cold war finally ended, is getting down to establishing a new world order that strictly respects the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

97-86110 (E)

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Niger welcomes the report presented by the Secretary-General last July on the reform of our Organization. We support this process and hope that it will provide synergy, giving the means and flexibility indispensable for the Organization if it is to meet the numerous challenges it faces at the dawn of the third millennium.

My delegation believes too that the Security Council must be reformed in order to make it more effective, given its responsibilities in the sphere of collective security. In particular, such reform must address the expansion of the Council on the basis of the principles of equitable geographical distribution and of the sovereign equality of States.

In the same vein, we consider that better handling of the emergencies that constantly arise in so many places must include an improvement in the Organization's capacity to deploy peacekeeping forces in a timely fashion wherever necessary.

Let me express Niger's deep concern at the conflicts and tensions in Africa and in the Middle East. Turning first to Africa, we note with distress that internal confrontations and disruptions are the main cause of the political instability in some countries and of the massive movements of refugees that are at the root of a tragic humanitarian crisis. Niger has a deep commitment to peace, and must once again urge the warring parties in the States concerned to renounce violence and engage in productive dialogue to find solutions to their disputes, thus restoring stability to their respective countries.

I take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to the people of Liberia, who after seven years of cruel war accepted the peace plan proposed by the States members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The Liberian people's will for peace is clearly reflected in their respect for the ceasefire and, above all, in the 19 July national elections, which were conducted in an atmosphere of calm and openness. I am pleased to pay tribute to the valuable role played by our great brother country, Nigeria, in the process of restoring peace to Liberia.

In Congo (Brazzaville), we hail the tireless efforts of neighbouring African countries, of the Organization of African Unity and of the United Nations to calm the situation. More than ever, that crisis highlights the urgent need to create an African peacekeeping force. I can today assure the Assembly that my country is fully prepared to contribute to the establishment of such a force, as it did in the cases of Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia.

Turning to the situation in Western Sahara, my country welcomes the recent agreement by the two parties; we hope that the referendum will take place in conditions of peace and calm.

To promote peace and security in the Middle East, the international community must pay sustained attention to the tension in the occupied Palestinian territories, which has been steadily rising since the Israeli Government decision to build a new settlement in occupied East Jerusalem. That Israeli decision endangers the peace process that began in Madrid on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and on the basis of the principle of land for peace.

In the face of that Israeli Government position, the international community has no choice but to redouble its efforts to secure dialogue and, above all, justice — which form the foundation of a peaceful future in the Middle East, along with the necessary exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, including the right to the establishment of an independent State, and scrupulous respect for agreements reached between the Israeli Government and the Palestine Liberation Organization on the basis of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Since its creation, the United Nations has always given high priority to disarmament, and in particular to the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. There has been good progress on this issue with the conclusion of a number of international instruments, the most notable of which, in our view, are the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Niger is deeply convinced that disarmament is an essential element in the maintenance of international peace and security and has acceded to those important agreements, which are aimed at preventing the development of nuclear weapons and of other weapons of mass destruction.

My country is keenly aware also of other, no less important, issues relating to illegal trafficking in small arms and to a complete ban on the anti-personnel mines that constitute a harsh scourge that continues to inflict unspeakable human suffering.

Civil wars and political upheaval in Africa have fostered the proliferation of illicit weapons. To collect and monitor weapons illicitly held by individuals, Niger has joined the United Nations and several neighbouring countries to take wide-ranging action against this scourge. On the domestic level, we created in 1994 a national commission for the collection and monitoring of illicit weapons.

My country is genuinely pleased also at the existence of regional disarmament initiatives, some of which have led to the conclusion of arrangements such as the Treaty on the Denuclearization of Africa.

In our view, it is essential to benefit from the climate of confidence and cooperation now prevailing on the international scene to give new impetus to multilateral negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. That is the only way to make progress towards building a safer world, which is a legitimate aspiration of all our peoples.

The tragic effects of poverty in a large number of countries merely exacerbate instability in the world.

Despite the remarkable progress made in recent years in the economic and social fields, following the implementation of structural economic reforms, Africa remains in many respects a region where poverty has increased spectacularly. On this continent are found the majority of countries with the lowest indices with respect to human development.

For this reason, as a Sahelian country, we feel that the reform process proposed by the Secretary-General must strengthen the role of the United Nations and its functions in development matters, making priorities of reducing poverty and strengthening the participation of more countries in an expanding world economy. The remarkable contribution made by the development institutions, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in our country must be highlighted. We encourage the Secretary-General to ensure that in the reform process there will be respect for the autonomy of these bodies in order to preserve their effectiveness.

We welcomed the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, adopted in 1991, which has been supplemented by the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa launched by the Secretary-General in March 1996. Their purpose was to help Africa in its recovery efforts. Today it is more urgent than ever that the industrialized countries grant broad support to these programmes, and establish funds for diversification to allow African countries to obtain a better return for their commodities and thus assure vital resources for their populations. This support in particular must take the form of resources to be invested in priority sectors, such as basic education, health and security of food and water supplies, sectors capable of laying down solid bases for sustainable development in Africa.

Africa certainly needs assistance. But my country remains convinced that the resources the continent needs for its development efforts can be generated by increasing trade with the developed countries. African countries are waiting for the industrialized countries to implement the measures adopted as part of the Final Act of the Uruguay Round negotiations, supplemented by specific preference provisions in the Marrakesh Agreements, to mitigate the negative effects the reforms envisaged in the negotiations could have on countries which are net importers of food products.

Similarly, the external debt of African countries is a problem requiring viable and fair solutions, going beyond the measures taken in the Paris Club framework. The new initiative taken recently by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to significantly reduce the multilateral debt of the poorest countries, should extend to all those countries, without any eligibility conditions or deadlines.

Nonetheless, the cancellation of all the debt is the most appropriate solution in order to ensure accelerated development by the least developed countries. Such actions, in my delegation's view, will make it possible to reduce poverty noticeably.

These recommendations are set out in the Agenda for Development, adopted during the last Assembly session. It is up to the international community to effectively implement this programme to bring about development and growth in our countries.

Because of its lack of resources, successive droughts and high population growth, Niger is part of the group of African countries where poverty is omnipresent. In the light of its high level of poverty, His Excellency Mr. Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré, President of the Republic of Niger, and the Government decided that for society to progress we needed stable and democratic institutions guaranteeing respect for and the promotion of human

rights. It was also decided to make all our development actions part of our battle against poverty.

In liaison with its development partners, the Government of Niger has therefore agreed on a plan to combat poverty, with policies to stimulate sustainable growth, improve rural income, give better access to social services and slow population growth, in particular. We would like to take this opportunity to invite bilateral and multilateral donors to play an active part in implementing this plan to combat poverty in Niger.

Our Government is firmly committed to ensuring good management of our economy, deepening the democratization process and bringing about the participation at all levels of those who would benefit from the execution of this plan, which is based on principles of good government. That commitment undoubtedly guarantees its success.

Moreover, I am particularly pleased to inform the Assembly, and thus to reassure the my country's backers and partners that peace in Niger has become an unquestioned reality. Indeed, since the signing of the peace agreement of 24 April 1995 in Niamey between the Government of the Republic of Niger and the Organization of the Armed Resistance, the peace process has made remarkable progress. For example, action has been taken with respect to decentralization, the return of refugees, the celebration each year of a day of harmony and the implementation of an emergency programme for the rehabilitation of our agricultural region. I solemnly appeal to the international community to contribute to the completion of the peace progress already begun.

Before concluding, I would like to reaffirm the complete commitment of a Sahelian country such as Niger to protecting the environment, whose continuous degradation is a source of real concern. Niger welcomed the recent holding in New York of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to a review of the implementation of Agenda 21 and the establishment of new policies for the future.

The special session showed us that while notable progress has been made with respect to climate change, biodiversity, combating desertification and the use of renewable sources of energy, that is not the case with regard to no less important questions, such as access to drinking water, which is a real problem for humankind, the unbridled exploitation of the oceans and deforestation.

Thus, we have to recognize that, at the conclusion of its proceedings, the special session did not live up to the hopes placed in it. In particular, it failed to create new levels of international cooperation or to establish a basis for legally binding codes of conduct on improved environmental protection.

In that context, my delegation confines itself here to recalling Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration, which emphasizes the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities for the entire international community with respect to environmental matters. The complementarity between economic, social and environmental questions obliges all our countries to acknowledge the need for solidarity and joint action to reach the goals laid down in Agenda 21. We owe this solidarity to future generations.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, His Excellency Mr. Alvaro Ramos.

Mr. Ramos (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me first of all, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your election to preside over this new session of the General Assembly. We are sure that the experience you have gained in your years of activity in the Organization, together with your personal qualities and technical skills, will, under your mandate, contribute to the strengthening of this most important body of the Organization.

Allow me also to express our congratulations to the outgoing President, Ambassador Razali, for the work he performed, which certainly contributed to the strengthening both of the presidency and of the role the General Assembly is called on to play in the United Nations.

Undoubtedly, the central focus of our attention will continue to be the issue of the reform of the Organization, the essence of which is now contained in the document submitted by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Tello (Mexico), Vice-President, took the Chair.

My country fully supports and has every confidence in the appointment and endeavours of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We have thus paid the greatest attention to the package of reforms he has submitted, and we are prepared to promote deliberations on them so that they can be concluded as soon as possible.

We understand that the document is aimed at the objective of equipping the Organization with an administrative structure that will permit more flexible management, prevent duplication of functions and secure coordination among its organs and programmes, all of which will result in an improvement in terms of both economy and management.

Within the overall issue of reform, the specific topic of the Security Council is one of the most important because of the political significance that organ has had and will continue to have within the structure of the United Nations. Uruguay endorses an enlargement of the Council because it believes that its structure should be adapted to the new realities in the world, which differ substantially from those that existed when the Organization was established, since at that time account was taken of the power structure resulting from the Second World War.

In this regard, we support an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent Members of the Council, to a total of not more than 25, so that efficiency is not impaired. Our country particularly supports an increased presence of developing countries to ensure a better balance in the membership of this singular organ of our Organization. We believe that the newly created seats should be occupied on the basis of real equality of opportunity for all States.

However, my country believes that the reform of the Council should not be confined to the topic of its membership. Equally important is ensuring that its activities are transparent and that information provided to and communication with the States that are not members of the Council flow freely and are up to date.

The Eastern Republic of Uruguay has expressed strong support for progressively limiting the right of veto, and to that end we have submitted a proposal to the effect that on certain subjects, the right of veto could be suspended by the General Assembly by a majority to be determined. That mechanism, essentially democratic in nature, would thus help reduce the absolute power of the right of veto as currently provided for in the Charter, while at the same time it would strengthen the competence of the General Assembly.

Nonetheless, our country will be ready to analyse any other proposal that might be submitted aimed at limiting the absolute individual veto.

While the reform of the Security Council and the possible revision of the scale of assessments have recently been, and continue to be, the focus of political attention, we should also study the question of strengthening the General Assembly. A calm and dispassionate analysis of the organizational structure and respective areas of responsibility of our Organization shows that the forum where the principle of juridical equality of States reigns supreme is undoubtedly the General Assembly.

There has been and still is much discussion regarding the composition of the Security Council and the exercise of the right of veto, in the context of the new parameters of international realities. That is all well and good, but at the same time, we need to find practical ways of revitalizing and invigorating the activity of the Assembly.

The General Assembly is a unique body in international institutional machinery. In it, representativity is practically universal. States participate on an equal footing without regard for their size or power, and the ideal of international democracy attains its clearest expression, at least in formal terms. The decisions of this body have great moral and political force and accordingly, it is essential to formulate them better and make them more timely.

For these reasons, the General Assembly not only needs to function more flexibly and utilize its resources more rationally, but also, and essentially, requires greater substance. Only thus will we be able to give its resolutions greater operative force.

Consequently, we should take a new approach and open a new chapter in the reform process, not confining our reflections and aspirations to reforms of the Security Council or to reforms of a financial nature, but extending them to the organ that brings together the international community as a whole, namely, the General Assembly.

After 52 years of the Organization's existence, the maintenance of international peace and security continues to be one of its essential functions. Peacekeeping operations, to which my country is proud to have been a contributor from the outset, must be fully maintained while adapting to new kinds of conflicts.

Uruguay is prepared for this, and, accordingly, we reaffirm here once again our commitment not only to continue to make our traditional contribution but also to

diversify it in order to adapt it fundamentally to peace-building.

In this connection, we welcome the signing, with the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, of a memorandum of understanding regarding our contributions to the United Nations standby arrangements system. This will contribute to facilitating the planning of future peacekeeping missions in the shortest possible time.

The General Assembly's recent adoption of the resolution putting an end to the use of "gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities" fulfils one of my country's long-standing aspirations and does justice to the principles of equitable geographical representation and the equality of Member States, both enshrined in the Charter.

Similarly, the recent General Assembly resolution adopting uniform and standardized rates for payment of awards in cases of death or disability sustained by troops in the service of the United Nations peacekeeping operations seems to us an important step that puts an end to an unjust situation.

We fully support the Middle East peace process initiated at Madrid in October 1991 and continued at Washington, and the Government of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay continues to encourage the necessary holding of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. It is essential for both parties to respect in good faith the commitments entered into in the Madrid and Washington declarations.

Our Latin American continent does not want an arms race; it wants, on the contrary, to be free of nuclear weapons and of other sophisticated weapons of mass destruction that can create instability. We want to work in peace, allocating the largest possible amount of resources to our economic and social development.

However, this should not be an obstacle to limited purchases of arms by our armed forces solely for the purpose of replacing their obsolete equipment, thereby fully discharging their constitutional mandates.

We must work to ensure a continuation of the mutual confidence and security that prevails in the region today, without third countries weakening and taking advantage of our continent through the sale of sophisticated weapons.

Uruguay will continue to support with firm conviction all disarmament processes, and, accordingly, we recently signed in Oslo the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines, those lethal weapons that have caused not only death and serious injury to soldiers but also the loss of thousands of innocent lives.

Protection of human rights has been and will continue to be one of the priority objectives of both our domestic and international policies. Without full exercise of human rights, there can be neither peace nor security, neither economic prosperity nor social equity, and the existence of a democratic system of government will therefore also be impossible.

In addition, there can be no full exercise of human rights without a minimum economic, social and educational base, and my country will be prepared to contribute to ensuring the existence of such a base.

In this connection, we fully support the restructuring proposed by the Secretary-General while at the same time endorsing the philosophy on which it is based, embodied in his idea that the question of human rights should be part of all the substantive spheres of the Secretariat's programme of work: peace and security, economic and social affairs, development cooperation and humanitarian affairs.

The financial crisis the Organization is experiencing, which has no counterpart in its history, stems primarily from the failure to pay assessed contributions. While not intending to justify any delay in payment, Uruguay believes that the current scale of assessments requires adjustments to make it fairer, more transparent and better based on the capacity of States to pay. That should not, however, mean that developing countries would assume new and additional commitments today; that would, in our view, be unjust and unacceptable. The system of contributions should be based on objective criteria of financial responsibility. We agree that there is a need to correct and manage the budgets of the Organization in order to reduce expenditures and increase efficiency, thus striking a balance between expenditure on peace and security and expenditure on development, each of which is a cornerstone of the other, without weakening operating and information activities.

We cannot but express our public satisfaction at seeing the importance the Secretary-General attaches to development, which he regards as one of the priorities

and essential functions of the Organization. There can be no peace without development.

On the threshold of a century that is already taking shape and that, unfortunately, seems to be marked by growth without equity, uncertainty in employment and a proliferation of crises and conflicts, good management of development assistance is today more necessary than ever before. At a time when human concerns seem to be alien to us, it is essential, in Uruguay's view, to support an Organization that holds that people must be placed at the very heart of the development process if we want growth to be compatible with the human condition and development to be conducted by and for people.

In this context, we consider it very important to maintain unconditionally the principle of universality and the right of all developing countries, without exception, to benefit from international cooperation and to receive technical assistance with a view to achieving sustainable human development.

Uruguay considers international technical cooperation essential for consolidating the processes of development and integration in the various regions. It is a fundamental tool for attaining greater economic growth.

We support the development of South-South cooperation as an important tool for promoting the improved development of nations. We believe that a new concept of technical cooperation will have to respond to traditional demands, such as humanitarian affairs, as well as others associated directly with the process of integration into the international economy, such as, for example, the redefinition of the role of the State, its modernization and its decentralization.

We believe that a positive contribution to political and democratic stability and to economic growth is made by processes of regional and subregional integration. In our case, the Southern Cone Common Market — composed of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and our country — is a clear example of democratic stability and expansion of trade, within and outside the region, compatible with the rules of the World Trade Organization.

Uruguay continues to assign to international law a primordial role as a regulator of relations among States. Respect for and compliance with international law are essential for peaceful coexistence. For this reason, we support the holding of an international conference to discuss a draft convention establishing an international criminal court for autonomous and independent hearings on certain crimes, such as genocide and others which, because of their seriousness, are roundly condemned by the international community. We also support the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the elaboration of a convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings.

In times of change, which we all see as appropriate and inevitable in order to revitalize the Organization, we nevertheless identify more than ever before with the essential purposes and principles established 52 years ago. These bind the Organization together and, despite the time that has elapsed and the important changes that have since taken place in the world, continue to constitute and must continue to constitute, today as yesterday, the goal and objective of all the changes the United Nations will have to face at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

People, simple people, call for us to be effective and efficient in our activities and bold in our decisions in preventing conflicts, and to act on their behalf in rebuilding civil societies. The citizens of every nation, of every country of the world, call on us today to be firm in our commitment to the Charter and to adapt our new activities to the changing times.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, His Excellency Mr. Ali Alatas.

Mr. Alatas (Indonesia): It gives me great pleasure to offer Foreign Minister Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine the felicitations of my delegation on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I am confident that, under his experienced leadership, we will achieve substantive progress in our work.

I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for the skilful manner in which he guided our deliberations during an extraordinarily busy year. His purposeful and decisive stewardship secured the success of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

I join other members in commending our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". His initiative deserves our praise and the recommendations in the report merit our serious consideration.

Since we met last year, world developments have continued to show a mixture of bright promise, new

challenges and pervasive uncertainty. The post-cold-war era has opened up new possibilities for the solution of persistent problems and conflicts and the pursuit of a global agenda for peace and development. In various parts of the world, protagonists have shown a desire to resolve their differences through dialogue and negotiations. Globalization has raised the hopes of mankind for equitably shared prosperity.

Yet, intra-State conflicts continue to rage in many parts of the world even as the international community faces a multitude of new and unpredictable threats and challenges. Despite significant strides in limiting armaments, the destructive power of nuclear weapons continues to pose a threat to all life on Earth. Poverty and backwardness hold dominion over vast areas of the developing world, while the developing countries are increasingly marginalized in international economic decision-making.

We cannot hope to rid the world of these systemic problems unless we can devise an effective system of global governance capable of managing the impact of globalization and interdependence, fulfilling the interlinked demands of peace, security and development, and reconciling the competing interests of a constantly widening range of actors in international affairs. For that system of global governance to be effective and universally accepted, it must have for its central mechanism and source of legitimacy a United Nations revitalized through a process of judicious reform and democratization.

My delegation has therefore welcomed the United Nations reform package that the Secretary-General presented to the General Assembly last July. We support the endeavour to transform the leadership and management structure of the Organization so that it can address the challenges of the new millennium with a greater sense of purpose, effectiveness and efficiency. We commend the proposal to promote sustained and sustainable development through, *inter alia*, the creation of a "development dividend" by shifting resources to development activities, especially those for poverty alleviation.

We attach great importance to the proposed measure to overcome the financial crisis of the Organization through the creation of a revolving credit fund pending the attainment of a permanent solution to the crisis. Just as crucial is the idea of enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations in disarmament activities by establishing a new department for disarmament and arms regulation, to be headed by an Under-Secretary-General. That new department, however, should squarely address the question of nuclear disarmament as a priority issue and not only the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

We also welcome the efforts to improve the Organization's ability to deploy peacekeeping and other field operations more rapidly, enhance the United Nations capacity for post-conflict peace-building, strengthen international efforts to combat drugs, crime and terrorism, and bolster international response to global humanitarian needs. The reorganization and restructuring of the human rights secretariat is also timely and appropriate. However, the idea of extending human rights activities by integrating them into all United Nations activities and programmes entails careful study. Hence, Indonesia stands ready to participate constructively in the detailed discussions on the proposed reform package which will take place during this Assembly.

Of equally vital concern is the question of the reform and expansion of the Security Council so as to reflect the realities of today and to accommodate the basic interests of the developing countries which comprise the overwhelming majority in the Organization. On the expansion of membership of the Council, our view is well known: that new permanent members should be chosen not only on the basis of equitable geographic representation, but also on the basis of a set of criteria such as political, economic and demographic weight; their capability and their track record of contributing to the promotion of peace both regionally and globally; and their commitment to assume responsibilities inherent to permanent membership. And we should first discuss and agree on this set of criteria before we determine who represents which region or which group of Member countries. We should not put the cart before the horse.

In this regard, predetermined numerical limitations would unduly restrict and possibly distort the representative value of the expansion of the Security Council. The African Member countries have indicated that they would like to have two permanent seats representing their region. By the same token, we believe that it is legitimate that the new composition of the Security Council should have two new permanent members from among the developing countries of the Asian continent.

As emphasized by the Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held last April in New Delhi, there should be no partial or selective

expansion of the membership of the Security Council to the detriment of the developing countries, and efforts to restructure the Council should not be subject to any imposed time-frame, for although the issue is urgent it should not be decided before there is general agreement. The Foreign Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement also stressed that the use of the veto should be curtailed with a view to its eventual elimination, and that the improvement of the working methods of the Council should be given equal importance.

While we are deeply engaged in this process of reform we must not lose sight of the fundamental goals that impelled us to undertake it in the first place: to enhance the Organization's ability to foster development and to address the root causes of poverty and conflict. Reform should not become a euphemism for budget slashing or an excuse for certain Member States to renege on their financial obligations to the Organization. When reforms are in place, they could indeed ensure optimum use of resources and generate savings. But they could become meaningless if, due to insolvency, the United Nations were rendered incapable of fulfilling its mission.

Much of the insecurity in the world today stems from the fact that the international community has not been able to abolish nuclear armaments. The Non-Proliferation Treaty has been indefinitely extended, but without any guarantee that the commitment to nuclear disarmament will be honoured. We are also dismayed that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty does not effectively prohibit nuclear testing in all environments and for all time, without loopholes or exceptions.

Nevertheless, we signed the Treaty in the hope that the nuclear Powers on their own would refrain from testing through simulation. That hope has been shattered by the sub-critical tests announced recently by a nuclear-weapon State. Although these sub-critical tests do not legally violate the CTBT, they make a travesty of the spirit of the Treaty. The nuclear Powers should desist from conducting such tests, as they could lead to the resumption of the nuclear arms race and its attendant risk of global disaster.

Meanwhile, in South-East Asia, the South-East Asia Nuclear- Weapon-Free Zone Treaty came into force earlier this year. We hope that the nuclear-weapon States will also contribute to regional security by their timely accession to the relevant Protocol of the Treaty.

In the Middle East we are witnessing a continuing escalation in Israeli provocative acts. Israel's encroachments on East Jerusalem, especially in Jabal Abu Ghneim, have plunged the peace process into deeper crisis and triggered unrest and tension on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel persists in its illegal construction activities, in blockading Palestinian territory and besieging Palestinian cities and towns and in withholding funds belonging to the Palestinian Authority.

The imposition of a harsh regimen of collective punishment contravenes all international legal norms and principles and violates the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. We must therefore vigorously support all efforts to restore the momentum of the peace process and to bring about the resumption of negotiations based on the provisions of the Declaration of Principles and the principle of land for peace. And we must continue to press for progress on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks of the peace process, for without such progress a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East question is not possible.

In Cambodia, the recent regrettable turn of events, which resulted in a significant change in the governmental set-up and political situation has threatened to plunge the country back into factional strife and instability. The interests of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Cambodia are inextricably linked, and the stability of Cambodia is essential to the stability of the South-East Asian region. Therefore, while ASEAN reaffirms its commitment to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, it stands ready to contribute its efforts to help restore political stability in Cambodia. Accordingly, ASEAN has proposed the immediate cessation of all armed hostilities and acts of violence throughout Cambodia and called on the conflicting parties to resolve their differences amicably.

Indonesia believes that a principled solution can only be reached through dialogue, with the aim of preserving the coalition Government that reflects the power-sharing arrangements resulting from the elections of 1993, held under the auspices of the United Nations. Furthermore, free and fair elections should be held as scheduled next May, with the participation of all Cambodian parties and political forces as an important element of its success.

Indonesia welcomes the convening of the four-party talks among the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the United States and the People's Republic of China. We believe that a positive outcome to these talks will pave the way for the

establishment of a permanent peace mechanism and that the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) will facilitate endeavours towards a lasting solution to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina the implementation of the Peace Agreement has entered a critical phase. Key provisions of the Agreement remain unimplemented. Refugees and displaced persons continue to be denied their right to return to their pre-war homes. Freedom of movement has not been restored fully, and discrimination and harassment are still prevalent. Challenges remain in the functioning of the common State institutions that are so vital to unity and reconciliation.

The unravelling of the Peace Accord would have devastating consequences for Bosnia and Herzegovina and its neighbours. All concerned should therefore join ranks and work together to ensure the irreversibility of the peace process and the full implementation of the Peace Accords.

It is encouraging to note from the *World Economic and Social Survey* and other authoritative sources that the global economy is basically healthy, that growth rates have risen for the third consecutive year and that such progress has been more widespread than before. However, we have no illusions that the global economy has fully recovered from a protracted period of decline during the past decade. The echoes of the recession in the 1980s are still reverberating. Millions in the developing world are still languishing in wrenching poverty. And this new growth has had little impact on rates of unemployment and under-employment. In fact, it would take another 10 years of similar growth just to recover the gross domestic product per capita levels of the early 1980s.

Globalization has indeed brought about an unprecedented surge in international trade, investments and information flows, but it has also accentuated the inequities and imbalances of international economic relations. Only the developed economies have fully benefited from it. The developing countries as a whole continue to suffer its negative impact while being marginalized from international economic decision-making processes in which they could otherwise seek redress from the inequities weighing down their development efforts.

Even developing economies that have attained some measure of dynamism are not immune to the perils of globalization and liberalization. Given the sharp fluctuations of international financial flows and currency manipulation by speculators, economies built through years of patient, sound and solid fiscal and monetary policies could be crushed overnight in the anarchy of the globalized market place. Globalization should, therefore, be managed so as to soften its impact on vulnerable economies.

Indonesia welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of An Agenda for Development, a major initiative designed to restore the theme of development to the centre of the operations of the United Nations. The Agenda provides a comprehensive framework of principles and measures designed to promote development as a vital preoccupation of the international community. It also seeks to restore the centrality of the United Nations in the pursuit of international cooperation for development.

Perhaps the greatest constraint to development today is the dearth of financial resources for development. While there is an increased emphasis on foreign direct investment, and this is welcome, the fact remains that official development assistance constitutes the principal source of development financing for the majority of the developing countries. Regrettably, official development assistance is in sharp decline, and has today reached its lowest level since target levels were adopted in 1970. Because many developing countries are unable to attract adequate volumes of foreign direct investment, the constriction of official development assistance has taken an enormous toll on their social and economic development, particularly in their efforts aimed at reducing hunger, illiteracy and child mortality. We therefore support the proposal in the reform package submitted by the Secretary-General for the creation of an Office of Development Financing that will pursue this endeavour full-time in tandem with the proposed "development dividend".

The problem of chronic external indebtedness constitutes another debilitating impediment to development. Despite various debt relief initiatives in the past, many developing countries remain crippled by their debt overhangs. My country has always advocated a once-and-for-all approach that entails a reduction of indebtedness to a level that will allow resumption of development. We therefore support the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, as it would help some of the poorest countries escape the vicious cycle of indebtedness and deprivation and once again take the road to development. In this context, Indonesia has pledged, as a concrete expression of this support, $10 million to

the World Bank's Trust Fund for the debt relief of the heavily indebted poor countries. We also urge that these initiatives be implemented expeditiously and with flexibility, and that they cover other heavily indebted countries that are also in dire need of development.

In this era of trade liberalization, and in spite of the presence of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the developing countries are finding their comparative advantage rendered meaningless by an array of non-tariff barriers, preference-erosion and the misuse of anti-dumping measures and countervailing duties. Moreover, the persistent attempts of developed countries to link international trade issues with extraneous issues, such as labour standards, amount to a new form of protectionism. Such insidious obstacles to free and open trade have to be done away with so that the global economy can benefit from an equitable, transparent and rule-based multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization as its embodiment.

Our common aspirations for global economic and social development will never be realized until all forms of discrimination are removed from society and opportunity is afforded equitably to all humanity. The Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination (1993-2003) should be the vehicle of our endeavours to end all forms of racism and racial discrimination. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, must be vigorously implemented at all levels. Likewise, implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action is essential for the attainment of a positive environment for enhancing the human condition.

As to the environment, it is regrettable that the special session of the General Assembly devoted to the review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and Agenda 21 has revealed that the commitments to the Rio Conference and to the Agenda have not been substantially fulfilled. The international community, particularly the countries that have the technological and financial resources, must summon the political will to bring positive action to support Agenda 21.

Vigorous measures should also be taken in defence of our human resources and social values against the thrusts of international crime, drug trafficking and drug abuse. We therefore remain committed to support the mechanisms of the United Nations anti-crime and anti-drug programmes. We look forward to the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 to assess the situation and to develop further ways and means of combating these international social evils.

In the area of human rights, the United Nations should continue to strengthen its role as the architect of a common plan based on a holistic approach toward the promotion of, and respect for, the inherent dignity of the human being. At all levels, we must work with all interested parties, maintain constructive relationships and foster dialogue and cooperation as the most effective means of advancing human rights. In this regard, Indonesia stands ready to cooperate with the High Commissioner for Human Rights. We also support all initiatives promoting a more balanced approach to human rights. In this context, we note with interest the 19-point Universal Declaration on Human Responsibilities proposed by the InterAction Council. We agree with former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, the InterAction Council Chairman, that, if adopted by the international community, the Declaration on Human Responsibilities, together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, could serve as twin pillars providing an ethical base for a just world. Indeed, freedom without acceptance of responsibility can destroy freedom itself, whereas when rights and responsibilities are balanced, freedom is enhanced. We have always held that although the individual should not be sacrificed in the name of society, neither should society be allowed to disintegrate to accommodate the individual. Without this fine balance, neither rights nor responsibilities can meaningfully exist.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express the gratitude of my Government to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the singular honour it recently bestowed on Indonesia by formally citing His Excellency President Soeharto and the people of Indonesia for

> "outstanding accomplishments and commitments to the significant reduction and continued eradication of poverty in Indonesia and for making poverty eradication an overriding theme of national development efforts."

This is an honour that Indonesia holds in trust for all developing countries endeavouring, in spite of their constraints and adversities, to attain a better life for their peoples while still contributing to the making of a better world. With developed and developing nations working together within the framework of a revitalized United Nations, we can indeed before too long achieve the final

conquest of the most formidable and tenacious enemy of humankind, poverty.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have the pleasure at the outset to extend to the President and his friendly country, Ukraine, my sincere congratulations on his election as President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. In wishing him success in conducting the proceedings of this session, I would like to assure him of my delegation's readiness to cooperate with him in making his task a success and in achieving the desired objectives of the session.

It is also my pleasure to commend the dedicated efforts of the President's predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, in presiding over the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, and to express the thanks and appreciation of the State of Bahrain to him and to his friendly country, Malaysia.

I would like to take this opportunity to express the State of Bahrain's appreciation for the tireless and sincere efforts that the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has made since his appointment and of the great attention he pays to international issues and, to the reform of the Organization and strengthening its role in the maintenance of international peace and security. By virtue of his extensive experience in the United Nations, he has gained expertise in both international politics and the management of the Organization.

I would be remiss in this connection if I did not express appreciation for the endeavours of the former Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and for his efforts and accomplishments with regard to reform of the Organization.

We do not believe there has been in the history of our modern world a period more harmonious with the spirit of the United Nations or more expressive of its orientation than the current period. Had the Organization not been established half a century ago by a farsighted initiative of the founding Member States, it would have been incumbent upon the international community to proceed to create it now, at this important juncture in history. This is because current international developments relevant to various aspects of human life require the existence of such an Organization, which, by its composition and nature, and guided by its Charter, is equipped to handle world affairs, in the spirit of one great family. Not a single international issue is now beyond the scope of the Organization.

The impression that the role of the United Nations has become marginal or marginalized in the wake of the cold war — true as it might be in certain isolated and limited situations and cases of international action — does not, in our conviction, reflect thoroughly and comprehensively the current stage of our world's history or the aspirations of all its States. Such aspirations require the existence of a world organization that is active and effective, not only in political and security affairs, but also, and increasingly so, in civilizational, developmental, economic, environmental, cultural and intellectual affairs. For increasingly, now that they have become the focus of attention of all nations, big and small, those non-political matters influence world affairs and the life and direction of peoples much more than political matters do.

We have followed with interest the work of the General Assembly's Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System and carefully studied the Secretary-General's report (A/51/950) to the General Assembly, "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", which he submitted on 14 July. We express our appreciation for the Secretary-General's invaluable efforts regarding the reform process, and the measures and recommendations contained in his report, and we would also welcome any General Assembly actions that would reflect the general attitude of Member States vis-à-vis the reform process that meets the current requirements and desires of Member States. My country is both interested in, and appreciative of, the work of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, in view of the great increase in the United Nations membership. It should also be pointed out that it is in the interest of the reform process that the work of the Security Council be transparent so that all other Member States which are not members of the Council are aware of the latter's proceedings with regard to the reform process.

Bahrain has presented its candidacy for Security Council membership for the period 1998-1999 in the elections that will take place during this session, based on

the provisions of the Charter that allow participation for all Member States. The history of civilization has shown us that a number of smaller countries and peoples have, not less than the larger nations, taken the lead in progress, development and creativity. The independent policy which the State of Bahrain has pursued throughout the 26 years that it has been a Member of the United Nations, has qualified its candidacy as meriting the support of the Group of Asian States for the non-permanent seat allocated to that Group.

Moreover, Bahrain has a long record of constructive participation in support of United Nations activities and in support of the rights of peoples to independence, freedom and self-determination, in opposing apartheid and in supporting decolonization. It has also been actively involved in the work of the United Nations system and organs dealing with the fields of disarmament and economic and social development. In addition, Bahrain has bolstered Security Council efforts in the field of international peace and security, particularly in the Arab Gulf region, which prompted the Secretary-General to pay tribute to that role to which he referred in paragraph 816 of his 1996 annual report on the work of the Organization. He said:

> "The Government of Bahrain's support for the Commission's [the United Nations Special Commission] Field Office has been outstanding and remains essential to the continued logistics lifeline to the activities of the Commission" *(A/51/1, para. 816)*.

Furthermore, the State of Bahrain hosts a number of United Nations regional offices, including, in addition to the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) Field Office, the offices of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environmental Programme, and the United Nations Information Centre.

The State of Bahrain welcomes the endorsement its candidature for Council membership has received from the Asian Group, the Group of Arab States and the member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, to which it belongs. Bahrain, noting the overwhelming support of the Member States, will have the pleasure to declare, when elected to the membership of the Council, that it will do its utmost, in cooperation with other Member States, to fulfil its duties towards the achievement of international peace and security and the upholding of the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

Through its experience in its region and larger area, my country has played, since the early years of the twentieth century, a significant and leading role in the development of civilization, culture and society, in modernizing management and the economy, and in consolidating the bases of an advanced civil society — a pioneering role to which any objective historian of the development of civilization in the Gulf region will attest.

The question of regional security remains of crucial importance to the State of Bahrain, in view of the dangerous ramifications and impacts it has on the security, stability and safety of peoples and nations. The situation in the Gulf region, which has witnessed in recent years two devastating wars that have upset the region's peace and stability and delayed the implementation of numerous development and construction projects, requires that all the States of the region and the world Powers with vital interests in the region promote and strengthen relations among the States of the region on the basis of good neighbourliness, mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and recognition of every State's national sovereignty.

The territorial and boundary claims currently witnessed in the Gulf region, aim at changing the established and traditionally accepted boundaries, disturbing the security and stability of the region. We believe that the optimum and most judicious course to avoid that prospect is to respect the status quo; to refrain from any claims, total or partial; and to settle any consequential disagreements by peaceful means acceptable to the parties to the dispute.

Insofar as the situation between Iraq and Kuwait is concerned, the State of Bahrain, being keen on the maintenance of security and stability in the Gulf region, stresses that Iraq should fully comply with the requirements of international legitimacy and uphold its commitments under relevant Security Council resolutions, including those relating to the release of prisoners and detainees of Kuwaiti and other nationalities. Bahrain is also keen on ensuring the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and opposes any interference in Iraqi internal affairs, as any such interference is considered a violation of the sovereignty of a Member State of the Organization.

The State of Bahrain also expresses its satisfaction that the oil-for-food agreement between the United Nations and Iraq is alleviating the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people.

In the same context, the continued occupation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of the three islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, all of which belong to the United Arab Emirates, constitutes an important cause for anxiety and concern to the State of Bahrain and the other member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, in view of the occupation's serious consequences for the security and stability of the region and the effect it has on good-neighbourly relations among the States of the region.

Consequently, the State of Bahrain calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond urgently to the calls of the United Arab Emirates to resolve the question of the islands through serious bilateral negotiations or through any other available peaceful means for the settlement of disputes through reconciliation among States.

The ominous setbacks and impediments that have beset the Middle East peace process which threaten that process and pose dangers to the entire region are but the result of Israel's non-adherence to the basic premises underlying the process since the Madrid Conference in 1991 and to the agreements which emerged from the negotiations that followed between the parties concerned. Only through compliance with those commitments, which are based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), the implementation of the land-for-peace principle, and refraining from any actions that contravene those commitments, can there be a viable basis for getting the peace process back on its proper track and the achievement of progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks as well. A just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region is not conceivable without the return of the occupied territories to their owners and the recognition of the Palestinian people's right to have their own independent state on their own national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.

For a just and comprehensive peace to be attained, it is essential that Arab rights be restored, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, which call for the complete withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Syrian Golan, southern Lebanon and the occupied Palestinian territories, including, most importantly, Jerusalem.

The State of Bahrain has endorsed the peace process since its inception in Madrid in 1991. It has participated in all the committees that have been established in connection with the process and has hosted a meeting of the environmental committee. This was in support of endeavours to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region, which should be the strategic option of all States of that region. A just peace which can guarantee that people's legitimate rights are restored is what will ensure security, stability and prosperity for the region's peoples.

The continued strife in Somalia has brought destruction and devastation to the Somali people. We reiterate our appeal to all warring factions to implement all agreements reached so far and to exert concerted efforts with a view to reaching a genuine and durable solution to the problem in order to preserve the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Somalia. With respect to the situation in Afghanistan, we call for an immediate end to the fighting among the sons who belong to the same homeland, for support of the efforts being made to this end, and for the achievement of national reconciliation with a view to preserving the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan without any external interference.

The State of Bahrain reiterates its support for the Dayton Agreement concerning peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It calls for full and complete implementation of that Agreement and for the creation of conditions that allow for the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons in complete safety and security. Such steps would enhance national reconciliation and help preserve peace and stability in the region as a whole.

As we reiterate our support for the unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus, we welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General aimed at the achievement of a just and practicable settlement in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions.

The international arena has witnessed terrorist acts whose repercussions have gone beyond the boundaries of the countries concerned. Violence has become so rampant and ferocious that it is possible to say that terrorist acts constitute crimes against the world order, the vital interests of nations, the peace and security of humanity and the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals. The spread of terrorism has caused the death of hundreds of innocent people and the destruction of public and private property, thus shaking internal stability and impeding the normal development of relations between States. Consequently, my country calls upon the international community to seek the best possible ways and means for the elimination of all serious crimes of a terrorist nature.

In this connection, the State of Bahrain expresses its support for the provisions adopted by the General Assembly in its relevant resolutions 49/60 and 51/210, and hopes that the international community will cooperate in the elaboration of a strategy for cooperation between States with a view to combating terrorism and not providing havens to terrorist organizations. Furthermore, States should allow neither their territories nor their media to be used, nor their civil liberties systems to be exploited, to the detriment of other States.

Bahrain, being a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, is of the view that the Treaty should achieve universality without any considerations or exceptions restricting it. At the same time, it would like to stress that the Treaty, as a vital pillar for the maintenance of international peace and security, should be upheld, its provisions respected and its purposes pursued till fulfilment. It considers Security Council resolution 984 (1995), albeit limited in terms of safeguards, a first positive step towards the achievement of comprehensive security safeguards for all non-nuclear-weapon States.

Because it believes that international cooperation is essential for ridding our world of all weapons of mass destruction, the State of Bahrain ratified last April the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. Convinced of the importance of peace, stability and mutual confidence in the Middle East, it has also endorsed the initiative aimed at establishing the region as a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction.

The world economy is currently experiencing a period of growth which, according to the estimates of this year's *World Economic and Social Survey*, is expected to reach 3 per cent this year. An observer of the economic conditions in developing countries, however, can perceive the extent of the difficulties faced by those countries in their endeavours to raise their economic level to the bare minimum and so enable their citizens to live with dignity. The close link between economic development and social development has become a cornerstone of the security and stability of societies, both in developing and developed countries. Yet the rising social tensions that we witness in numerous societies in developing countries, emanating from economic problems, underlines the need to address and deal with that phenomenon at the international level.

When developed countries contribute to the development of the economic systems in developing countries they do not, in so doing, merely assist those countries; they also enable the developing countries to become an effective economic partner, which can assist the developed countries in combating the scourge of unemployment, inflation and economic stagnation.

The inability to strike a balance between social and economic issues and the preservation and management of the resources needed for development, coupled with an increasing emphasis on environmental protection, has undermined development, a cornerstone of Agenda 21, which was adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It is therefore imperative that international agreements reached and commitments made during that Conference be implemented, and that measures to speed up the implementation of the Agenda be identified without any need to reopen discussions on matters already agreed upon. The issues addressed by the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly last June, in which Bahrain took part, for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, were more detailed and specific in so far as poverty eradication and environmental protection are concerned, although the desired results have not been attained.

The destructive effects on humanity of drug and psychotropic substance abuse, production and illicit traffic are among the most serious challenges we face. We therefore welcome the convening of a special session of the General Assembly in 1998 to be devoted to this question and related crimes and to the achievement of tangible results in relation to the objectives envisaged in resolution 51/64 concerning the negative and destructive implications of drug abuse, on the basis of the principle of joint responsibility in confronting the illicit drug trade. Collective measures should also be taken to solve this problem, which constitutes a common threat to the international community.

In the light of the new world realities, the United Nations should play a more effective role in providing organizational frameworks and appropriate forums to enable various Member States to contribute within their capacities and capabilities to the reshaping of our modern world, tending towards increased closeness and interaction on various planes of human activity.

The current period, characterized by cascading changes, requires a joint intellectual vision on the part of all Member States of the Organization and their peoples with respect to what should be done for the common good of mankind and to prepare for it. Such a vision should transcend visions of conflicting ideologies, which characterized the world of the cold war as well as the predictions of future clashes of civilizations.

It is also vital that the United Nations create a favourable climate and appropriate management whereby it can provide, in addition to the basic functions it undertakes, a veritable forum for world thought, into which will flow a variety of opinions, emanating from various regions, civilizations and experiences. Thus, the Organization may help crystallize an overall human vision conducive to understanding, peace and cooperation, rather than a situation in which new adversaries and enemies are sought for one side or another.

The current period also requires us to bring about cohesion and integration among the various elements in the flow of information and satellite transmissions from every corner of the Earth. The volume of this information is enormous, its sources diverse and its objectives conflicting; it has deluged societies. It is difficult to absorb all this information, and perceptions of it are often confused.

Unless a common, comprehensive and inclusive vision is found to restore cohesion and compatibility to this great mass of information, the world will be threatened with intellectual chaos that could take it back to a time when disorder and contradictions held sway in mankind's vision. No global mechanism is better suited to be the proper means and the appropriate international forum for this universal intellectual task than the United Nations. It should at this stage provide direction and guidance for all aspects of international cooperation, both within the framework of the Organization and at the regional and national levels.

While we look forward to such a comprehensive vision for our modern world, we must stress that it would be prudent not to let globalization — which is a natural and acceptable phenomenon in the context of technology, science, production, economic and information systems and the related material components of our common human civilization — be imposed, especially through coercion or pressure, on special spiritual, religious, cultural and political attributes. If it is, the world will fall into the abyss of futile ethnic, cultural and religious feuds. Development of the moral aspects of civilizations and systems can only occur gradually, through inner conviction, and in tandem with the logical internal development of each structure and system rather than through technological development that spreads rapidly from civilization to civilization. Coerced imposition of globalization on any spiritual or moral facet of a society, especially through external sources, would constitute a wrongful revival of political and cultural colonialism, whose cumbersome legacy and adverse effects the world has barely eradicated. It is our hope that if it builds on the remarkable role it played in the elimination of the old form of colonialism, the United Nations will be able to play a positive part in steering the process of globalization in the right direction and in preventing the unilateral takeover of a world of diverse spiritual cultures and civilizations.

In view of the Organization's contribution to the preservation of world peace and security and the role it continues to play in support of the causes of peace and justice and in the implementation of the principles of international legitimacy, its activities in the field of preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping operations, and its constructive role in resolving numerous questions and crises, it is incumbent upon us to make available to the United Nations all possible moral and material support and to cooperate with it and with its specialized agencies.

Hence the importance, in our view, of formulating within the framework of the United Nations a balanced intellectual vision which, in addition to bringing out elements which are common to all peoples, would be based on respect for legitimate pluralism as it relates to special spiritual, moral and political attributes. In the absence of such a balanced vision, our world is apt to continue to be threatened with imbalance, instability and a lack of security.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call next on His Excellency Mr. Alexander Arzoumanian, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Arzoumanian (Armenia): I begin by congratulating Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I am confident that the skills and vast experience he has acquired throughout his distinguished diplomatic career will provide the guidance we need to guarantee the successful outcome of the session.

I must also recall the remarkable diligence of his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, and his valuable contribution to the work of the fifty-first regular session and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.

As the twentieth century comes to an end, it is evident that all countries in the world, advanced, developing and transitional, will be substantially affected by globalization. Further specialization, the widening of markets through trade, a broader division of labour and a more efficient and more diversified allocation of financial resources should increase overall productivity and raise living standards. However, no country will benefit from this trend spontaneously or automatically. The major tasks that Governments face today are development and the pursuit of sound policies and appropriate structural adjustments to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities of globalization.

Economic reforms, which Armenia began immediately after its declaration of independence, have changed all key sectors of the economy, particularly agriculture, enterprises, prices and wages, the banking industry and the fiscal, foreign trade and exchange systems. Concurrently, the country began the institution of secure property rights and a judiciary strong enough to protect them.

After a devastating fall in real output from 1991 through 1994, macroeconomic and structural reforms, combined with privatization, have stabilized the country's economy while bringing down inflation, and allowed Armenia to achieve significant growth in 1996. Armenia's gross domestic product, which dropped 25.3 per cent on average from 1991 to 1993, has turned around and has averaged 6.3 per cent annual growth since then. This is despite a disastrous earthquake in 1988, the conflict between Nagorny Karabakh and Azerbaijan, which caused the inflow of more than 300,000 refugees, and continuing problems in obtaining stable energy and industrial supplies because of a blockade imposed by neighbouring Azerbaijan.

The drastic changes were coincident with the adoption of a medium-term macroeconomic reform programme supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The major objectives for the 1997 period are: to maintain a real annual growth rate in gross domestic product of about 6 per cent; to continue curbing the inflation rate for the whole year and keeping it under 10 per cent; and to augment the level of gross foreign exchange reserves to the equivalent of 2.8 months of imports.

Also, the Government of Armenia will go on to take several measures during the programme period aimed at continuing to refine the targeting of social safety-net benefits to alleviate a sharp decrease in average consumption levels and improve income distribution.

For Armenia and countries with economies in transition as a whole, the move towards world market prices brought severely deteriorated terms of trade. The introduction of currency convertibility and a notable increase in external borrowing began to cause frequent unsustainable external debt positions. The resources which are urgently required to modernize the industrial structure to internationally competitive levels and to improve the general infrastructure immensely exceed domestic saving capacities. This situation underlines the necessity of addressing more thoroughly the needs of countries in transition by the international donor community, though this should not cause a decrease in official development assistance flows to the developing world.

In this context, Armenia welcomes the adoption of the Agenda for Development by the General Assembly earlier this year as one of the major documents which should be among the guidelines for actions of the United Nations system and affiliated institutions to strengthen international cooperation for development. We also support the appraisal of conditions in Africa, least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries as "Critical situations and special problems" within the Agenda for Development, and we hope that the post-cold-war international community will pay more attention to these issues of prime concern.

The interaction between the United Nations and other multilateral development institutions, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, should be intensified, involving the field level in particular. Joint efforts could be concentrated especially on those areas where private investors need encouragement, and where without such general institutional support they would hesitate to commit long-term capital. Proper intergovernmental follow-up and implementation of the corresponding General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions are capable of facilitating this process.

Sustainable development and related environmental issues are other areas of strategic importance where the United Nations must further strengthen its credibility. We acknowledge the outcome of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 as an important step to enhance the implementation of the major international global and regional environmental agreements.

Economic and democratic reforms are complementary and heavily interdependent. Political and economic freedom means more predictable, more transparent, more constitutional, less discriminatory and less corruption-prone law-making and enforcement.

We recognize democracy and respect for human rights, universal access to knowledge and information and a high level of public awareness as preconditions for sustainable social development. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the role of human rights within the United Nations system.

Armenia considers self-determination to be an inalienable human right. In this respect, the Nagorny Karabakh conflict continues to occupy the Government of Armenia. Despite concentrated negotiations of the past several years, the maintenance of a ceasefire for more than three years, and the intensified efforts of the international community, the Nagorny Karabakh peace process continues to suffer from a lack of serious progress. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Lisbon Summit of December 1996, which was expected to reflect on the peace process, to consolidate the ceasefire and to provide impetus for a possible breakthrough this year, failed to serve its intended purpose. Instead, by attempting to predetermine the final status of Nagorny Karabakh, it unnecessarily stiffened Azerbaijan's position and minimized the possibility of a mutually acceptable compromise solution. We believe that the final status of Nagorny Karabakh should be negotiated between the parties directly involved and not dictated by outside interested parties.

Armenia appreciates the most recent efforts of the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen to reach a compromise solution, which were also manifested in the Denver statement of the Presidents of the three co-chairing countries. Armenia has provided a detailed response to the proposal of the Minsk Group Co-Chairmen, insisting on securing commonly recognized freedoms for the Nagorny Karabakh population, as well as guaranteeing their security so that their physical existence and control over their territory and destiny are never threatened.

Armenia believes that a resolution acceptable to all parties involved is key to establishing durable peace and stability in the region and to stimulating economic growth and prosperity in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh. My country remains committed to a negotiated settlement of the conflict and will continue to engage constructively in the peace process. However, we urge Azerbaijan to negotiate directly with the elected officials of Nagorny Karabakh, for we strongly believe that no final solution can be achieved without Karabakh's direct participation in the deliberations on its own political status.

The Republic of Armenia has been actively participating in the fields of arms control and disarmament. We reaffirm our commitment to full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) objectives. To that end, Armenia welcomes the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) programme on strengthening the effectiveness and improving the efficiency of the safeguards system. We have already expressed our readiness to conclude a supplementary protocol to the safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

Last year the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We join the international community in calling upon all States to sign and ratify this Treaty to ensure its early entry into force.

The Chemical Weapons Convention was another historic accomplishment in the field of global disarmament. As a founding member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Armenia will advocate the full and effective implementation of the Convention.

Armenia also supports the complementary efforts — through the Ottawa process — aimed at achieving a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines. We realize the importance of developing technological solutions to mine detection and clearance, and we fully support programmes on assistance to mine victims.

The reform of the Security Council should become another important component of the overall reform within the United Nations. Armenia supports the current discussions on improving the representative character of

the Security Council. We are in favour of expansion in both categories, permanent and non-permanent. However, while strengthening the capacity of the Council, such an increase should also safeguard its decision-making efficiency. We believe that five new seats should be allocated as permanent for the Security Council to better reflect present political and economic realities. This arrangement should include improved representation for the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. We also support the desire of Germany and Japan to acquire the status of permanent members of the Security Council.

As regards the non-permanent seats, it is our view that the expansion should take into account the legitimate interests of the Eastern European Group, whose membership has more than doubled in recent years.

The Government of Armenia welcomes the proposals by the Secretary-General for the reform of the United Nations. We fully support his commendable efforts to refine the structure of this Organization and to streamline the operations of its system, to make it more flexible and capable of adequate, timely responses to the challenges of today's world. These proposals are a sound basis for immediate actions, further negotiations and deliberations by the General Assembly. There is a strong need to consolidate the ongoing attempts of the United Nations system and Member States to alter and develop the Organization. At the same time, we should avoid reducing the evaluation of these reforms to a purely financial or managerial approach. Reform must enable the United Nations to attain more effectively the mandates and priorities enshrined in the Charter.

In conclusion, let me assure the Assembly that Armenia, keenly aware of the importance of an effective and active United Nations, is committed to contributing its share in the strengthening of this Organization.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, His Excellency Mr. Abderrahim Zouari.

Mr. Zouari (Tunisia)(*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me to begin by expressing my warmest congratulations to the President upon his election. We are confident that his experience, know-how and broad understanding of international issues will be invaluable in carrying out the noble mission that has been entrusted to him and will provide the best possible assurance of the success of this session. His election to the presidency reflects the very special respect the international community has for his friendly country, Ukraine, because of its wise policy, based on moderation and a sense of proportion and also because of the efforts it is making to consolidate the principles of peace, justice and cooperation as the foundation of relations between States.

I also wish to express our warmest thanks and gratitude to last year's President, His Excellency Mr. Razali Ismail, who throughout his term in office distinguished himself by the dedication and loyalty with which he carried out his functions, playing a remarkable role in the reform of the United Nations and its restructuring and adaptation to the changes occurring in the world, and in preparing it to enter the twenty-first century with greater efficiency.

Reform of the United Nations and its restructuring are undoubtedly in the forefront of the issues on this session's agenda, particularly since Secretary-General Kofi Annan has kept the promise he made when he took office and has submitted a report on reform of the Organization that contains numerous measures and recommendations that are important for the Organization's future. It is with pleasure that I pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for all the initiatives he has taken and the bold proposals he has made since taking office a short while ago with a view to reforming the Secretariat and rationalizing its functioning.

Tunisia, which took an active part in the discussions held in the various working groups entrusted with the reform process, wishes to underscore the prime importance of the issues raised in the Secretary-General's report, both those that fall within his competence regarding coordination between the different Departments of the Secretariat and between the United Nations and its specialized agencies and those reforms that concern the United Nations activities and fall within the competence of the General Assembly, in connection with which the Assembly will adopt relevant resolutions.

There is no doubt that the international community is motivated by a sincere will to give a powerful impetus to the reform process to enable the United Nations to accomplish the tasks provided for in the Charter, whether with regard to achieving security and peace in the world or to establishing conditions for sustainable development, two closely related, complementary goals.

In our view, the most important priority of the reform process is to focus on strengthening the United Nations role in achieving development and in reducing and eradicating poverty, mobilizing the means required so that developing countries can achieve economic and social development and meet the crucial challenges imposed upon them by globalization and by the market economy.

Notwithstanding the well-being and prosperity that technological progress and globalization of the economy have brought to certain countries, while others have been excluded, the world's economy continues to suffer from imbalances that hinder growth in developing countries and endanger international stability. We consider it essential to give priority to these situations in United Nations programmes and activities in order to narrow the chasm that exists between States, give new impetus to international cooperation in the field of economic and social development and strengthen the United Nations capacity for effective and efficient action in this regard.

Tunisia stresses the need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of development in order to consolidate the General Assembly's prerogatives with regard to preparing cooperation policies and monitoring their execution. The United Nations continues to be the ideal forum for this within the framework of the international community. That also requires that Member States honour their financial commitments to the United Nations in order to provide the necessary means required for successful reform, the realization of the United Nations various programmes and rational, judicious use of resources.

In this connection Tunisia once again reaffirms its support for the restructuring of the Security Council to ensure a fairer representation of Member States and to guarantee the interests of developing countries within the framework of equality for all Member States, consecrating the spirit of the Charter and giving concrete expression to its principles. In this regard, my country would recall the legitimate claim of the African States, as expressed at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit Meeting held at Tunis in June 1994 and reaffirmed at the recent OAU Summit at Harare, calling for the allocation of two permanent seats on the Security Council to be occupied by African States on a rotating basis.

It is also important to continue to improve the working methods of the Security Council and to implement fully the procedures stipulated in the Council's rules of procedure to ensure the effective participation of United Nations Member States and their collective responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

The maintenance of international peace and security and the elimination of the hotbeds of tensions, conflicts and wars that still rage in many regions of the world are today, in addition to the problems of development, at the forefront of the international community's concerns, and they continue to require determined and consistent action by the United Nations.

In this context, Tunisia emphasizes the importance of the role the United Nations must play with regard to the situation in the Middle East in the light of the dangerous developments that are taking place there. The United Nations has followed the Palestinian problem since the very beginning and has had a special responsibility to the Palestinian people from the adoption of the resolution on the partition of Palestine until the formulation of the basic principles of a pacific settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Tunisia has stood by the Palestinian people in their struggle to recover their legitimate rights and for 12 years was home to the Palestine Liberation Organization. It has followed, from a position of neutrality, the Middle East peace process and played, at the behest of its of President, a historic role in triggering that process. It has supported the process at every stage, beginning with the initial contacts between the conflicting parties, at the Madrid Conference, and in the Oslo, Washington and Cairo agreements. Tunisia was also a party to the multilateral negotiatiops. As such, Tunisia wishes here to express its profound concern and indignation at the obstruction of this process and at the freezing of the agreements that led up to it, as well as at the renewed dangers of conflict, violence and instability in the region.

We denounce the Israeli Government's policy of *fait accompli*, its failure to respect the international agreements that have been signed and the unilateral measures it has taken in building colonies inside and outside Al Quds, destroying houses, confiscating identity cards, inflicting collective reprisals against the Palestinian people, seizing their financial assets, continuing to besiege them and taking all sorts of other arbitrary measures. We call emphatically for a return to the basic references that have been part of the peace process since its inception, particularly the principle of land for peace, and for respect of international legality on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the relevant General Assembly

resolutions. Furthermore, we call for the implementation of all the provisions of the agreement pertaining to the transition stage, including the second redeployment, the opening of a secure road between the West Bank and Gaza, the opening of the airport and the port, the release of prisoners and the beginning of the final status negotiations, in accordance with the agreed-upon schedule.

The international community, particularly in the meetings of the Security Council and the three consecutive meetings of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, has already condemned the current Israeli Government's policy of building settlements in Al Quds and in the occupied Palestinian territories. This policy has greatly discouraged the Palestinian community and international opinion in general, particularly since it has given rise to acts of violence for which Israel bears sole responsibility, given the profound despair that has replaced the relief that had been felt throughout the entire region.

Tunisia exhorts the international community, and especially the two sponsors of peace, to act expeditiously and firmly to save the peace and avert the dangers that threaten the region so that the Palestinian people is able to recover its legitimate rights to the creation of an independent State on its own soil with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and to ensure the restoration to Syria and Lebanon of the territories which Israel has occupied.

We note with satisfaction the United States' resumption of efforts to save the peace process, notably the meeting held yesterday in New York between the parties concerned. We also welcome the efforts being made to restore confidence among the parties concerned with a view to helping them overcome the current crisis and achieve an equitable settlement of the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. We feel that actions undertaken to date to mitigate the risks of tension and conflict in the region remain far below what we had hoped.

Tunisia regrets the deterioration of the current financial situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which hinders its mission to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. While reaffirming the international community's responsibility for the question of Palestinian refugees, we urge it to continue to provide assistance to UNRWA in order to allow it to carry out its mandate fully and resume its work. We urge all donors countries to maintain and honour their financial commitment and to increase their contribution to the Agency budget, taking into account the natural growth in the number of Palestinian refugees, in order to allow the Agency to overcome its severe financial crisis.

Tunisia's awareness of the importance in today's world of economic and geographic groupings to meeting the challenges of globalization and the changes we are currently witnessing encourages us to be firm and consistent in pursuing our efforts to complete the construction of the Arab Maghreb Union. The Union represents a particular claim made by the peoples of our region and one of the goals that we, together with the leaders of our brother Maghreb countries, are striving to attain.

This strategic option for the future of the peoples of the region and their cooperation with their immediate environment is strengthened by the efforts our country is making, under the impetus of President Ben Ali, to construct a Euro-Mediterranean area that will serve as a framework for cooperation among the Mediterranean riparian countries, for solidarity among their peoples and for cultural and social dialogue in the context of the noble values and principles in which we all believe. Our country has already assumed a distinctive role in ensuring the success of the various meetings and conferences held to this end, from the preparatory meeting of the region's Ministers for Foreign Affairs held in Tabarka, Tunisia, to the Barcelona conference and the meetings that followed. Our country gave concrete expression to this option in 1995 by signing an association agreement with the European Union.

We believe that it has become imperative to respond favourably to the willingness of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to settle the Lockerbie question in a fair and honourable manner in the framework of proposals made by the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Non-Aligned Movement. These proposals can help to achieve a peaceful solution based on international legality and thereby hasten the end of the suffering being endured by the brother Libyan people under the embargo. They would also strengthen stability in that part of the Mediterranean.

We also take this opportunity to call for an end to the suffering that has been inflicted upon the Iraqi people for a number of years now. We hope that relations among the States of the Gulf region will be based on respect for the sovereignty of all the States of the region, their territorial integrity and the inviolability of their borders, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of

the Security Council. In this context, Tunisia once again reaffirms its solidarity with the United Arab Emirates in the peaceful efforts they are making to recover the islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.

The success of the United Nations in achieving international peace and security does not rest only on peacekeeping operations, preventive diplomacy and the peaceful settlement of conflict. It also requires progress and accomplishments in the field of disarmament. Despite the end of the cold war and the achievement of a number of positive results, particularly in limiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, these weapons — particularly nuclear weapons — continue seriously to threaten all mankind.

Tunisia, which has ratified all the international conventions on the subject, reiterates its appeals for the establishment of a denuclearized zone, free of all weapons of mass destruction, in the Middle East. This appeal has been supported by the accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of all the countries of the region with the exception of Israel, which has neither ratified the Treaty nor placed its nuclear facilities under the system of international controls, thereby endangering the security and integrity of the entire region.

There are many regions of the world that continue to be torn by war and conflict and whose populations are confronted with tragic situations as a result of instability, insecurity, famine and destitution. We nonetheless note with satisfaction that, despite the persistence of hotbeds of tension and instability in some of these regions, the African continent is beginning truly to awaken to the possibility of restored security and renewed economic growth in a number of its regions and countries.

Tunisia welcomes the development of the situation in Africa and the sincere determination of member countries of the Organization of African Unity to pursue the reforms that have been undertaken to restructure economies and consolidate democracy. At the same time, my country reiterates the appeal made by President Ben Ali many times to the international community for increased attention to be paid to the continent's problems in order to eradicate once and for all the hotbeds of tension that remain in Africa, so that security and stability may be instituted throughout the continent, enabling all its peoples to devote themselves to work and to economic development.

In this context, the role to be played by the United Nations in assisting the countries concerned to overcome these difficulties and challenges assumes primary importance. It is a role that should be seen in the context of the prime responsibility that our international Organization assumes in preserving peace and security and in confirming the fact that the United Nations is irreplaceable in these endeavours. However, this in no way minimizes the importance that should be given to the action of regional organizations, whose role has grown in recent years, making their influence visible and palpable.

Our country emphasizes the importance of the role devoted to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, which was set up by the Organization of African Unity for all issues related to security and stability on the African continent. This clearly does not prevent us from supporting any international initiative that is consistent with this essential principle and that reinforces African efforts to preserve peace and security on our continent.

We applaud the efforts of the United Nations Secretariat to stimulate cooperation and to promote consultation with the Organization of African Unity to strengthen its capacity for preventing conflicts and maintaining peace. Numerous African States, including Tunisia, have declared their willingness to participate in the standby arrangements for peacekeeping, thereby demonstrating their determination to contribute to United Nations efforts to improve the methods of organizing United Nations peacekeeping operations. There is no doubt that the promotion of international cooperation, particularly in the field of training and logistics, can ensure the success of the standby forces, thereby making it the basic formula for the establishment of United Nations peacekeeping forces. In this regard, we reaffirm Tunisia's unswerving desire to make a real contribution to the efforts of the United Nations to preserve international peace and security.

Our country has contributed both military and civilian contingents to many United Nations peacekeeping operations — from the Congo in the early 1960s to other similar operations in a number of African countries; in Cambodia; in Bosnia and Herzegovina; in Croatia; and recently in Haiti — thus giving concrete evidence of its faith in international action and cooperation carried out by the Organization. Tunisia will continue to support and assist United Nations peacekeeping operations whenever necessary.

In order to meet the challenges generated by globalization and openness in the world economy, Tunisia

has introduced substantial and coherent reforms in the political, economic and social fields to ensure society's equilibrium and integrity and the solidarity of its members, thereby eliminating the negative factors that could hinder this: exclusion, neglect of the human aspect in development, and the creation of chasms between social categories resulting from disparate levels of development within a given society.

We are convinced that global development can be achieved only when the vulnerable sectors of society have been assured the conditions for integration with economic dynamics. This requires uprooting the causes of poverty, destitution and marginalization, which is consistent with the commitment to promote solidarity and mutual assistance between the members of society on the national level, and efforts being made in that direction on the international level.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations afforded the leaders of Member countries an opportunity to confirm their determination to revitalize the role of the United Nations and to confer upon its actions greater dynamism at a time when problems of security, development and environment multiply, requiring joint efforts and shared determination to face them with a view to achieving progress, prosperity and well-being for all.

The success of the United Nations remains contingent upon action in accordance with the goals and principles enshrined in its Charter. It is also conditioned by the commitment of all countries, large and small, to implement decisions which uphold the values of liberty, dignity and justice. In so doing we will respond to the aspirations of our peoples who are the essential guarantors of the United Nations vitality and of its capacity for renewal, durability and ability to meet the challenges which humanity will confront during the next century.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, His Excellency Mr. Boris Shikhmuradov, on whom I now call.

Mr. Shikhmuradov (Turkmenistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me to congratulate Mr. Udovenko, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly. His election signifies recognition of Ukraine's great prestige in the world, respect for and confidence in the country's foreign policy, and the personal and professional qualities of the new President.

We are sincerely grateful to Ambassador Razali Ismail for his remarkable diplomatic talent and efficient performance of the President's functions during the previous session of the General Assembly.

First of all, allow me to express our satisfaction with the report presented by the Secretary-General. It is an innovative and specific document devoid of many of the weaknesses typical of similar documents in the past. Turkmenistan supports the Secretary-General's programme to reform the entire United Nations system and the functioning of its bodies — in particular the Secretariat — and to tailor the financial resources of the Organization to its planned activities.

We share the conclusion in the report that the reform of the United Nations should be radical and not gradual. However, we believe that the reforms should not be carried out as a revolutionary overhaul, especially when it comes, for example, to the Security Council, which after it becomes more representative should still remain an effectively functioning body that should not supplant the General Assembly.

In our view, a rational increase in the number of permanent members of the Security Council primarily calls for the inclusion of such States as Japan and Germany — vested with all corresponding rights and powers — because they can make a constructive input and have greater political objectiveness with respect to the work of the Security Council.

There is an issue of special interest and concern for Turkmenistan, as well as for all the countries of the region: the question of Afghanistan. We are glad to note that this question finds an increasingly prominent place in the agenda of the United Nations and in the activities of its agencies, ad hoc bodies and the Security Council. We feel special gratitude for the Secretary-General for his continuing efforts to give a new impetus to the intra-Afghan settlement. In this context, we attach particular significance to the efforts of the Secretary-General's special envoys Mr. Norbert Hall and Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. Turkmenistan was involved in the implementation of peacemaking programmes in the region by hosting a series of inter-Tajik talks and by organizing, together with the United Nations, a major international conference on humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. Turkmenistan resolutely supports and will support to the utmost the earliest possible convening of an international conference on Afghanistan with the participation of all its immediate neighbours and, in the future, the holding of

conference with the participation of the Powers vested with special international authority and capable of making a practical contribution towards the settlement. The President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, maintains constant contact regarding this matter with Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, and with the leaders of the neighbouring States of Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Turkmenistan pins great hopes on the forthcoming summit meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), to be held in Tehran in December this year, which will give the Muslim world an opportunity to determine at the highest level the guidelines for the resolution of the prolonged Afghan crisis, which has today become a bleeding wound for the Afghan people and an obstacle preventing the region from implementing major economic programmes. Turkmenistan has always believed, and still believes, that conflict situations emerging in the OIC's geographical area should be resolved through its joint efforts with the United Nations.

We are happy to be witnessing today a greater display of restraint with regard to simplistic attempts aimed at associating extremism and other negative phenomena with the world of Islam. The Muslim world like any other — for example, Christianity — is multifaceted and diverse. It confronts a whole complex of universal problems of development, and it is being mobilized to overcome conflicts and combat manifestations of uncivil social behaviour. The need for this was emphasized by the Secretary- General in his report to the current session of the General Assembly. While it is a secular and democratic State in Asia, Turkmenistan also considers itself a traditional oriental society that, by virtue of its geopolitical destiny, finds itself at the juncture of two regions, involving it simultaneously in Asian and European international affairs. Against the backdrop of the global energy potential of our State, this factor forms the basis of the United Nations-supported strategy of Turkmenistan's neutrality, which today acquires practical significance for the Organization.

All our political efforts today are aimed at creating a favourable atmosphere for economic development, both of the entire region and of every country in particular. At its summit meeting held last May in Ashgabat, the regional Economic Cooperation Organization, which today comprises 10 nations, formulated a strategic programme for the development of transport, energy, pipeline and telecommunication infrastructures. Its implementation not only corresponds to the interests of the participating States but also creates opportunities for the delivery of energy carriers, oil, gas and oil products to international markets in Europe and Asia from the enormously rich deposits in the Caspian Sea basin and the entire Central Asian area. Turkmenistan believes that, in the intensification of international cooperation, the resolution of crises in Central Asia and the use of preventive measures aimed at precluding their recurrence because of conflicting claims of States to ownership rights over natural resources, it is necessary to take into account the global challenges of the twenty-first century, which call for the early development of additional and alternative means for the rational distribution of energy-producing raw materials on world markets. Turkmenistan possesses the world's third largest gas deposits, and it has huge oil reserves and other mineral resources. It is ready to take part in open and broad-based international cooperation in this endeavour. This approach has been confirmed by the recently issued international tender for the development and exploration of oil and gas deposits in the Turkmen zone of the Caspian Sea. We cannot but express our satisfaction at the lifting of artificial barriers to the gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Iran to Turkey and Europe. We consider this a good sign from the United States, a sign that it is ready to support our efforts to strengthen our sovereignty and independent national economy.

In this context, allow me also to express our satisfaction at the fact that the Secretary-General's report and other recent documents of the Organization have at last more clearly defined the notion of Central Asia, which includes many more States as compared with the old central Asian part of the former Soviet Union. During the past several years Turkmenistan has maintained a consistent and principled approach to this issue, emphasizing that the disappearance of the southern borders of the former Soviet State gave rise to the formation of a new region unified by the common purpose of accelerating economic development and strengthening its political and State structures. Today it is inconceivable that Turkmenistan should exist without equally close ties within this region — with Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan and other neighbours. We are firmly convinced that the former Soviet "Central Asian 5" have quite logically been transformed into the "Central Asian 10" and that the United Nations and its different agencies should bear in mind this objective reality when formulating their approaches to the region.

I believe it is highly important to draw the Assembly's attention to Turkmenistan's sincere commitment to the efforts of the international community to bring about the complete banning of the production

and proliferation of all types of weapons of mass destruction. Turkmenistan fully subscribes to the Ottawa process for the elimination of anti-personnel landmines. In 1996 and 1997, together with Canada, Turkmenistan actively participated in international forums in Vienna, Bonn, Oslo, Brussels and Ashgabat, which have been major milestones on the road towards the signing of the treaty banning anti-personnel landmines, which is to be signed in December this year in Ottawa. Coming from a region that has suffered the horrors of this so-called indiscriminate type of weapon, Turkmenistan is convinced that it is a timely and highly relevant treaty.

At the end of the twentieth century international relations are characterized by one specific feature: the right of choice that is enjoyed today by an unprecedentedly large number of independent nations and States. This right is becoming an increasingly stable trend strengthened by greater tolerance and patience in international relations. Participation or non-participation in one or another political or economic grouping is no longer considered, nor can it be considered, through the prism of the formula "If you are not with us, you are against us". Turkmenistan does not object to the idea of the existence of the great Powers' regional interests. This is the right of every State. However, we, like our partners in the Non-Aligned Movement, unequivocally object to the existence of zones of unilateral domination. We stand for the principle of open land as well as that of open skies. While building its relations with all States on the basis of the principles of equality and mutual respect, neutral Turkmenistan does not divide its partners into categories of close or remote, big or small, because that runs counter to the political logic of our times.

Today, during my meeting with Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary- General of the United Nations, I delivered to him a personal message from the President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov which, in particular, states, first, that our political philosophy and all our actions are free of any self-serving interests and are primarily aimed at strengthening peace and raising the economic well-being and cultural and educational level of its peoples; secondly, that the United Nations can be fully convinced that Turkmenistan is prepared to give the Organization its maximum possible assistance; and, finally, that the United Nations can count on Turkmenistan in all its initiatives and endeavours in the region.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Her Excellency Mrs. Nadezhda Mihailova.

Mrs. Mihailova (Bulgaria): I would like, first of all, on behalf of the Bulgarian delegation to congratulate Mr. Udovenko on his election to the presidency of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. His vast experience and knowledge will be of great importance for the successful fulfilment of the tasks facing the Organization today. I would also like to express our appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for his competence in presiding over the fifty-first session.

The statements of previous speakers have proved the importance of the necessity for an efficient overall reform of the United Nations. I would like to declare Bulgaria's support for the position of the European Union, as stated in this general debate by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, Mr. Jacques Poos.

The word "reform" has been used so much today in different parts of the world that I would be afraid of classifying United Nations reform with the various other reforms advocated by numerous politicians. If I take the liberty of sharing the Bulgarian experience, it is because in early 1997 my country lived through its genuine reformist resurrection. Hundreds of thousands of citizens walked in the streets of Sofia and other Bulgarian cities and towns to demand opportunities, not well-being. Their voice precipitated early parliamentary elections and brought a disastrous rule to an end.

Obviously, three things are needed for the success of reform: vision, strategy and courage. The vision about where we want to go, the strategy for getting there and the courage to begin.

I hope that the fifty-second session of the General Assembly will be remembered for decisive progress in designing and carrying out the reform of the United Nations. We have already heard the profound analysis and the valuable proposals put forward in the report of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. It is now the turn of the representatives of Member States to commit their vision, sense of strategy and courage.

Let me briefly present our views on the main aspects of the reform of the United Nations. The Bulgarian Government has thoroughly studied the proposals and the report of the Secretary-General. In principle, we support and approve of these proposals.

The Republic of Bulgaria considers the ongoing discussion within the United Nations on the reform and

enlargement of the Security Council to be positive and substantive. In our view, the decisions on these important matters should be reached by consensus. We believe that the enlargement should reflect the increased number of United Nations Member States. On the other hand, the growing economic and political potential of some Member States may attest to their ability and maturity to successfully assume the responsibilities and meet the challenges of permanent members of the Security Council.

A fair decision on the enlargement of the Council should preserve the balance between the permanent and non-permanent members, as well as among the regional groups. Such a decision should also include the allocation of an additional non-permanent seat for the Group of Eastern European States.

We support the efforts aimed at further improving the early warning system of the Organization. The new challenges to international peace and security demand an enhanced role for United Nations peacekeeping operations. As an active participant in United Nations peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Tajikistan and elsewhere, Bulgaria welcomes the growing efficiency of the Security Council and also supports an enhanced role for the Secretary-General in the field of preventive diplomacy.

Bulgaria shares the view that future peacekeeping operations should encompass the whole complex of political, humanitarian and military aspects of peacekeeping in order to achieve maximum efficiency. Close cooperation with the regional security organizations and other relevant bodies is of key importance to the success of future United Nations peacekeeping efforts as well.

For years now the United Nations has been operating under the burden of a serious financial crisis. Bulgaria supports the initiatives contained in the report of the Secretary-General aimed at elaborating criteria and mechanisms for stringent financial discipline, strict control and accountability. Such an approach could contribute to the successful implementation of the administrative reform and reorganization of the Secretariat.

We believe that a new scale of assessments for contributions to the United Nations regular and peacekeeping budgets would allow greater account to be taken of the financial potential of individual Member States. Bulgaria shares the ideas expressed by the Secretary-General that the reform should be implemented within the framework of a complex approach that would not neglect the specific needs of the countries in transition and the smaller States.

We support the efforts aimed at restructuring the governing institutions of the United Nations in the socio-economic field; at raising the operational capacity of the Economic and Social Council and of the specialized funds and programmes; and at transferring funds from management and administration to social and economic programmes.

As Assembly members are probably aware, 1997 was a difficult but successful year for Bulgaria. The beginning of the year was marked by an acute economic, financial and political crisis, which resulted in the appointment of a caretaker government, the dissolution of the Bulgarian Parliament and early elections. At the same time, the civilized, peaceful and constitutional way in which Bulgarian society overcame the political crisis is a very important sign of the maturity of democracy in the country.

At the elections held last April the Union of Democratic Forces won an overwhelming majority for their agenda: financial stabilization, market-oriented structural economic reform and speedy privatization; the strengthening and modernizing of State administration; rule of law and combating organized crime and corruption; and the integration of Bulgaria into the Euro-Atlantic community of nations.

We have made every effort to implement this strategy, and today we already have the first positive results. In the political sphere, the transition to the rule of law, political pluralism and respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms has been completed. The democratic institutions are stable and enjoy the broad support of more than 50 per cent of the people. In the economic sphere, a currency board was successfully introduced as a means of guaranteeing financial stabilization and of restoring the confidence of the international financial institutions and business circles in Bulgaria. This has resulted in a radical decrease of the inflation rate and an increase in foreign investment and the country's currency reserves. The results of the crackdown on crime and corruption have re-established respect for law and order.

Here I would like to point out that Bulgaria attaches great importance to the concerted efforts of the world community in the fight against organized crime and terrorism. We look forward to contributing to the efforts

to elaborate the future international convention for the suppression of terrorist bombings and for the drafting of a widely accepted text of the statute of the international criminal court.

We are also committed to draft regional programmes for preventing organized crime, international terrorism, illicit drugs and arms trafficking, illicit trade in nuclear materials and the trafficking of people.

The desire of the Bulgarian Government to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union underlies our foreign policy and is overwhelmingly supported by the Bulgarian nation. For us, accession to these institutions is an expression of the European identity of Bulgaria and an integral element of the political and economic transformation of the country. It is a question of immediate national interest and strategic priority, a matter of choice of civilization; and not an issue of politics of the day.

Bulgaria considers the decisions reached at the NATO Summit in Madrid as a historic opening of the alliance to the new European democracies. We feel strongly that the enlargement should continue as a geographically balanced process aimed at achieving equal security and stability in different regions; thus the risks of new dividing lines or grey zones in Europe would be avoided.

Our Government is making great efforts to intensify its preparations for accession to the European Union, with a view to meeting the requirements for membership in the nearest possible future. We strongly hope for a political decision by the European Union to start the negotiations with all associated countries at the beginning of 1998. This would be a confirmation of the position that all candidate countries have equal chances of becoming members.

Bulgaria considers these integration processes as a significant contribution to the strengthening of regional stability and security in south-eastern Europe. The Bulgarian Government is making every effort to promote European standards of international conduct in this part of the continent. Our approach has been backed by a number of important initiatives at the regional level. The cooperation between NATO members and partner countries in the area is an important element in this process, and Bulgaria has advanced ideas for an enhanced Euro-Atlantic cooperation on the security of south-eastern Europe and the Black Sea.

Bulgaria will also continue to work actively along the lines of its 1996 initiative for security, stability and cooperation in south-eastern Europe. We attach great importance to the coordination of our efforts with the other initiatives for cooperation in the region, especially with the Royaumont process launched by the European Union and the South-east European Cooperative Initiative, sponsored by the United States.

Our aspiration to non-permanent membership of the Security Council for the 2002-2003 period demonstrates our readiness to assume responsibilities for peace and security both in the region and in a wider international context.

As members know, Bulgaria has suffered tremendous losses as a result of the strict implementation of the sanctions imposed by the Security Council against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Combined with the disadvantages caused by the sanctions against Libya and Iraq, the total amount of the direct and indirect costs to Bulgaria is comparable to the country's foreign debt. Therefore, the Republic of Bulgaria will continue to attach particular importance to the work being done within the United Nations system to address more effectively problems related to the implementation of Article 50 of the Charter.

We welcome the provisions of the General Assembly resolutions urging the organizations within the United Nations system, international financial institutions and other international bodies to continue to address more specifically and directly the issue of economic assistance to third States affected by the implementation of the sanctions. I should like to draw the Assembly's attention to the possibility of granting certain exemptions from sanctions or creating a preferential regime for the most gravely affected third States. Naturally, these exemptions and preferences should be in accordance with the Charter. We believe that the burden of the specific economic problems created by the sanctions should be fairly distributed among all third countries and not borne by neighbouring States only.

We strongly believe that while negotiating with sanction-affected third countries, the international financial institutions should take account of the need to compensate them indirectly.

It is our understanding that the United Nations specialized agencies play an important role and provide valuable support to countries in their efforts to achieve

sustainable development. The reforms which are under way in these agencies need the support of the Member States. The reform processes in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and other organizations give us hope of success.

Bulgaria believes that the activities of international forums and bodies for human rights should be aimed at ensuring the effective exercise of these rights by every human being. The implementation of international standards could be achieved by improving existing mechanisms and by a constructive and open dialogue on the most sensitive issues. This approach is not directed a priori against any country or group of countries. In this context, Bulgaria attaches high importance to the guarantees for the human rights of Bulgarians living abroad and is closely watching the situation of Bulgarian minorities. We consider respect for the rights of Bulgarians in neighbouring States and the related implementation of international human rights standards as an important factor in the promotion of bilateral relations.

The monitoring and the effective control of the implementation of human rights and fundamental freedoms remains of critical importance, and Bulgaria reiterates its support for the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. I should like at this point to welcome the appointment of Ms. Mary Robinson to this high post and to wish her every success in her activities.

The Bulgarian Government regards the possible spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery as one of the major concerns of the 1990s. The existing regimes of multilateral treaties, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, provide for basic restrictive norms in this field. The Republic of Bulgaria supports all international endeavours to meet the goals of non-proliferation and stands for a further strengthening of these regimes.

The Conference on Disarmament is an appropriate forum for negotiations on the elimination of certain types of conventional weapons. A long-lasting solution should be found to the problem of anti-personnel landmines, the ban on which has humanitarian and disarmament aspects and needs a verification regime. We believe that the text of a new Convention that would ultimately ban all anti-personnel landmines, which was agreed at the Oslo Diplomatic Conference this month, could well serve as a basis for achieving a comprehensive and widely accepted international agreement. We also hope that the Ottawa process and the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament will be mutually supportive and will result in an effective ban on anti-personnel landmines.

In conclusion, finding an adequate solution to these problems will be impossible without the successful reform and restructuring of the United Nations Organization and of all its bodies. Therefore, we expect a decisive breakthrough in this direction at the present session of the General Assembly. I am personally convinced that by the end of this session the United Nations will have changed, and that this change will be for the better.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): In his statement to the General Assembly this morning, the Permanent Representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya referred to the bombing of Pan American flight 103, a terrorist incident in which, together with that perpetrated against UTA flight 772, 441 people from 27 separate Member States of the United Nations were murdered — 441 people from 27 separate Member States. I should like to take this opportunity to restate the British Government's position.

As the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, made clear during the Security Council debate on 25 September, this question is not a dispute between the Libyan Government and a number of other countries. It is about the need for the international community to respond to acts of international terrorism and about the consistent failure of the Libyan Government to comply fully with Security Council resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993). Compliance with Security Council resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter is an obligation for all Member States of the United Nations. The United Kingdom seeks no more and

no less than that Libya should demonstrate its respect for the United Nations and the international community by complying fully with the relevant resolutions.

These resolutions make it clear that Libya must hand over the Lockerbie accused for trial in Scotland or the United States. These provisions are for Libya to comply with, not to negotiate over. We reject utterly the imputation that a trial in Scotland would be unfair. There are comprehensive safeguards in the Scottish judicial system to ensure fairness. These were set out in a British letter to the Secretary-General in September 1993, and were then accepted by Libya itself. In order to provide further reassurance, however, let me repeat the offer made by the British Foreign Secretary last week. The United Kingdom would be prepared to make special provision for international observers from the Arab League, the Organization of African Unity or any other such body to attend a trial in Scotland to monitor its impartiality. Additional facilities would also be provided, including daily access to the accused if the latter so wished.

This offer demonstrates our genuine wish to see an end to this impasse and to be flexible within the parameters set out by the Security Council to achieve this end. It remains for the Libyan Government to meet its responsibilities and to abide by the Council's decisions in full.

Mr. Burleigh (United States): On behalf of the United States, I would like to exercise my right of reply to the Libyan representative's intervention to the General Assembly earlier today.

The Libyan representative made numerous references to my country, many of which were gratuitous in nature. Nonetheless, I would like only to address one of the issues raised: the lack of Libyan compliance with the world communities desire to seek justice for the victims of the Pan Am and UTA bombings. In this regard, allow me to quote a point made by the Secretary of State during the Security Council ministerial meeting last Thursday. She said that we

> "must reject the culture of impunity that has protected those guilty of gross violations of human rights or the export of terror to other nations. In this regard, ... there can be no compromise with Libya when it comes to terrorism." (*S/PV.3819, p. 29*)

The statement made today by the head of the Libyan delegation is yet another example of Libya's constant attempts to turn its international obligations into an issue between States. This is not an issue between States. This issue is about Libya's obligations to the international community. There can be no negotiation between Libya and the Security Council regarding fulfilment of Chapter VII obligations. Libya's refusal to meet its obligations amply demonstrates its disdain for the United Nations, and the Libyan Government, not the Security Council, bears responsibility for the plight of the Libyan people. The Government of Libya knows what needs to be done to bring an end to sanctions: full compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. To do less is to insult the memory of those who died so tragically and to deny the victims' families the demands of justice.

Mr. Muntasser (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I requested the floor to respond to the statements just made by the representatives of the United Kingdom and the United States with regard to the facts, the unquestionable facts, that were contained in the statement made before this Assembly this morning by the head of our delegation with regard to the question of Lockerbie.

I would first like to state that the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom were not able to refute any of the facts contained in our statement. They have not been able to answer the questions raised in it, which in itself is testimony to the arrogance of both and the invalidity of their positions.

Secondly, the two representatives denied that the dispute was between Libya on one side and the United States and the United Kingdom on the other. They also alleged that it was a dispute between Libya and the Security Council. To prove the invalidity of that allegation, I would only recall the intense deliberations of the Security Council on 10 June during the review of the sanctions imposed on Libya. That review lasted for more than two hours and the dispute was between these two countries and the rest of the membership of the Council. Libya is not a member of the Security Council and was not called to attend. Neither Libya nor any other countries were invited. All the members of the Council were on one side and the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom were on the other side. The members of the Security Council with whom we have been in contact have always told us that the difference is not with the Security Council; rather, it is with the United States and the United Kingdom. In this context, and to prove the validity of what I say and the falsity of their allegations, I would like to recall what

took place in the Security Council meeting on 25 September 1997 with regard to the situation in Africa. President Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe and the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, said that it was necessary

> "to find a solution to the dispute between Libya, the United States of America and the United Kingdom over the Lockerbie tragedy. ... Now that Libya has agreed that the two accused Libyans can be tried under Scottish Law, by Scottish judges but in a third country or at the International Court of Justice, we feel that this offer should receive your serious consideration so that matters can move forward."(*S/PV.3819, p. 4*)

All other States members of the Security Council have endorsed President Mugabe's statement and only the United States and the United Kingdom rejected it. Can we, after all this, claim that the difference is between Libya and the Security Council? Of course, we cannot. The Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, acts on behalf of the Member States and not on behalf of the United States and the United Kingdom. The Security Council must express the will of the international community and not that of those two countries, which regrettably enjoy permanent membership and enjoy the right of veto, and impede the Security Council from responding to the international will.

The United States and the United Kingdom claim that their rejection of a trial in a neutral country is based on their domestic laws, which do not permit this. At the same time, they demand that other countries turn suspects over to them for trial. Do they not know that there is domestic legislation preventing the surrender of suspects to them? Do they think that their domestic law is superior to that of other countries?

The representative of the United States spoke of terrorism. If I were to reiterate all the acts of terrorism committed by the United States world-wide, I would never be able to finish within my 10-minute limit. Suffice it to remind the international community of a very important episode: the United States has, more than once, perpetrated against my country more grave acts. Using its naval and air forces, it committed a brutal raid on 15 April 1986 against the President of my country and his office and against residential areas in Tripoli and Benghazi. Dozens of women, children and elderly people were martyred as they slept at night.

The United States cannot provide one proof of what it calls Libyan terrorism, but there is testimony and proof by the dozen of United States terrorism against Libya. The 15 April 1986 raid is not a mere suspicion, as in the case of the United States with regard to two Libyan citizens, but a reality that took place and whose effects persist in the form of graves and the remains of buildings. The effects of the bombs and the rockets are still there.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.